



Australian Government



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Learning & Teaching



# Learning and Teaching Across Cultures

## Good Practice Principles and Quick Guides

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- commissioning work on issues of strategic significance to the higher education sector to inform policy development and practice in relation to learning and teaching
- managing a suite of awards to celebrate, recognise and value teaching excellence and programs that enhance student learning
- funding fellowships and secondments for leading educators to address significant national educational issues
- disseminating resources on innovations in learning and teaching
- supporting the development of effective mechanisms for the embedding of good practice in learning and teaching in Australian higher education
- encouraging collaboration and sharing of good practice for improved student learning outcomes and
- facilitating networking and professional development opportunities for academics and professional staff.

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# Good Practice Principles: Teaching across Cultures

The Good Practice Principles Teaching Across Cultures have been developed to guide and inform practice. They are designed to help program leaders and teachers to design, implement and evaluate curricula and teaching practices. Those who provide learning support services may also find the guides useful in the evaluation of their contributions to effective teaching and learning across cultures.

## The Principles in Brief

Good teaching across cultures will:

- 1: Focus on students as learners
- 2: Respect and adjust for diversity
- 3: Provide context-specific information and support
- 4: Facilitate meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement
- 5: Be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence
- 6: Prepare students for life in a globalised world

These principles are informed by research reported in the Good Practice Report: Learning and Teaching across Cultures <http://www.olt.gov.au/resources?text=learning+and+teaching+across+cultures> . They are explained in more detail below.

## The Quick Guides

A suite of Quick Guides to good practice in teaching across cultures has been created using the six principles. You can find guides on curriculum design, teaching, assessment, supporting English language development, group work, working with learning and language support professionals and professional development for teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse learners [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

### Quick Guides are available on the following topics:

- Assessment
- Curriculum Design
- Developing English Language Skills
- Managing Group Work
- Professional Development
- Student Services
- Teaching

The Quick Guides can be found at the following web address: [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac)

## The Principles Explained

Following Nicol (2007) the Good Practice Principles seek to:

- capture core ideas from the published research
- be specific enough to guide teachers in their practice
- be flexible enough to accommodate the variety of different learning and teaching contexts within which teachers and learners work, for example: offshore, onshore, online, in large and small groups.

The Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides do not provide a prescriptive or complete list of best practice. They have been written to assist teachers and those who work with them to check their current practice and consider what they might do to make improvements appropriate to their particular context. This approach is consistent with Yorke (2012) who writes, ‘... teaching is not a simple matter that can be expressed in a set of rules applicable to all circumstances. Rather, it has to be approached in terms of a set of principles to be applied in a manner appropriate to circumstances’ (p. v).

### Four basic premises underly the principles

#### 1. Teaching practices and learning behaviours are effective if they are fit for their purpose.

Purposes for teaching and for learning vary. Teaching practices and learning behaviours are most effective when they are fit for their purpose. For example, in circumstances where a repetitive and memory-based approach is required, teaching practices that encourage repetition and recall will be effective. In other circumstances, where application and developing a personal stance in relation to a topic are required, a more effective approach would be to encourage discussion and debate. If the intention is to develop critical thinking skills and the teaching encourages and rewards rote learning, the teaching practices are not likely to be effective. They will not encourage fit-for-purpose learning behaviours. In order to be fit-for-purpose effective teaching across cultures also recognises that students bring different skills and experiences of learning and of teaching. Individual students will be stronger in some areas than others.

#### 2. Teaching encompasses a broad range of activities.

Teachers select content, plan classroom learning activities, design assessment tasks and provide feedback on student performance. Principles for effective teaching across cultures need to be equally broad ranging and allow for variation in implementation, depending on the nature of the discipline and its related professions, the teaching and learning context and the characteristics of the student group.

#### 3. Teachers have access to specialised support for being effective intercultural teachers.

Teaching across cultures can be challenging and responsibility for doing so effectively rests primarily with individual teachers but never with them alone. Institutions have a responsibility to provide teachers with access to specialised support; program teams need to collaborate and design programs where developing students’ skills and knowledge of intercultural learning are shared. Teachers have a responsibility to access ideas, advice and expertise and to use them effectively to improve student learning.

#### 4. Cultures are dynamic and variable.

There are many ways of defining culture. The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people. Cultures are most often recognised by shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and affective understandings. These are learned through a process of socialization. However, within different cultural groups, individuals are unique. Meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication within and across cultural groups. Cultural learning is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process for students and teachers. Cultural diversity in the student population has a significant impact on teaching and learning.

# 1

## The Principles Explained

### Principle 1: Focus on students as learners

Students who enter tertiary education have been learning for years, within differently organised systems and using a range of teaching and learning methods. No learning environment is value-free and moving between systems with different expectations and assumptions will almost inevitably result in intercultural incompatibility. All students, not just some students, need to adjust to the disciplinary and academic cultures of their universities. It is important to make expectations of learners clear and transparent.

Even with help, transition can be difficult and may take some students longer than others.

Effective intercultural teaching assumes everyone benefits from expanding their repertoire of learning behaviours. Some students will prefer to absorb information by listening carefully, taking notes and reviewing lecture content online. Others will prefer to ask questions, challenge the 'facts' that are presented and engage you and other students in argument and debate. Transition into a new academic culture will usually require students to acquire different skills and adopt locally valued behaviours in order to be effective learners.

In line with this principle you can teach effectively across cultures by, for example:

- providing prompt feedback to students on their performance, including their use of language for academic and professional purposes
- not making assumptions about students' learning preferences based on their cultural background or their appearance
- providing a variety of learning and assessment activities
- providing examples, models and suggestions of ways of approaching learning in the discipline
- facilitating the development of self-assessment and reflection on learning
- embedding the development of academic and information literacy skills into your course
- supporting the development of communities of learners through, for example, peer mentoring and peer assisted study programs.

More examples of this principle in practice are provided in each Quick Guide.

### Principle 2: Respect and adjust for diversity

Terms such as 'international students', 'domestic students' and 'indigenous students' are frequently used, and with good reason, but they can mask the diversity within these groups. Indigenous, international and domestic students differ markedly, for example in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic status and age as well as in their prior experience of education, work and life. There are also variations in English language capability within each group. Diversity can be a resource that enriches all students' learning if teachers are able to create an inclusive learning environment.

Teaching and learning within a culturally inclusive learning environment requires effort from teachers and students. For teachers, the aim is to create a learning culture that exposes all students to multiple perspectives, challenges them and connects with them with alternative views of the world. Inclusive teaching treats different ways of knowing as a valuable resource for learning.

Students are unlikely to respect and value their diverse peers' knowledge unless encouraged to do so. Respecting and adjusting for diversity requires judgement and reflective practice on the part of the teacher and reflection on the effectiveness of any attempt to create a more inclusive teaching environment for all students.

# 2

You can teach effectively across cultures, adjusting for diversity, by, for example:

- finding out about incoming students' linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds. Student groups will differ, one from another and individuals will differ within those groups
- recognising diversity in the cultural, socio-cultural, academic and linguistic backgrounds of the local student population
- adjusting teaching, learning and assessment activities to take into account and utilise your students' diverse cultural, socio-cultural, academic and linguistic backgrounds, work and life experiences
- asking students about their preferred modes of learning and encouraging them to try new approaches to learning
- maintaining a sharp eye on equivalence, fairness, inclusivity through reflective practice informed by student performance data
- building on and using your students' cultural and social capital, and individual differences
- seeking out examples, suggestions and guidance on effective ways in which others have made adjustments to cater for student diversity.

More examples of this principle in practice are provided in each Quick Guide.

### **Principle 3: Provide context-specific information and support**

3

The context in which learning takes place includes the surroundings (such as the university campus and its location), the setting (for example large lecture theatre, laboratory, small classroom) and the circumstances (for example a 'test' under supervision, an online discussion group in a first year class). People will bring different expectations and attribute different meanings to their surroundings, settings and circumstances. The context will shape their own behaviour and how they expect others to behave but most remain unaware of what they expect or assume in a familiar setting or situation. It is easy to assume that others understand context in the same way that we do.

Teaching and learning is an interaction where individual teachers and students may have very different expectations of each other. Context-specific information and support makes expectations transparent. Clarity is especially important in relation to assessment expectations including the criteria by which success will be measured. A second aspect requiring explicit context-specific information is tertiary academic skills, such as academic writing, information literacy, numeracy and computer literacy. Each academic skill is defined and expressed within a specific disciplinary context and all students will benefit from being taught, for example, particular disciplinary requirements in relation to critical thinking, using sources appropriately and identifying and reviewing relevant literature.

You can teach effectively across cultures, adjusting information for context, by, for example:

- recognising the need to adjust teaching and service provision for learning context and student cohort
- conducting a needs analysis at the beginning of a course and using findings to shape provision
- referring students where necessary to specialist services, preferably tailored to the needs of your course/subject
- seeking advice and assistance from support services staff with specialised knowledge on embedding the development of academic literacies into course and assessment design
- encouraging students in lectures and tutorials and/or online to ask questions about expectations in relation to assessment criteria (including the weighting of components such as grammar, vocabulary, content and structure)
- explaining what different task requirements mean ('evaluate', 'justify', 'analyse') and creating opportunities for students to use and critique exemplars of efforts to meet task requirements

- clarifying what good performance is by providing marking rubrics which explain each criterion; clarifying expected standards or performance for specific assessment tasks
- waiting after asking a question to give less confident English speakers time to formulate an answer.

More examples of this principle in practice are provided in each Quick Guide.

## Principle 4: Enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement

Creating environments conducive to interaction is an important foundation for meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement. Recent research highlights the importance of teacher intervention focussed on enabling meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement such as:

- creating opportunities for all students to learn and “practise” intercultural communication skills
- embedding the development of English language skills in the curriculum as English language competency plays an important part in students feeling confident in social interactions
- planning and managing formal group work within courses so that it enhances understanding and appreciation of other cultures, preparing students for their future lives where international and intercultural awareness and skills will undoubtedly be required
- planning and managing formal group work across programs so that early experiences of intercultural learning which are not sufficient on their own, are followed up at different stages of the program and skills are consolidated.

The informal or co-curriculum can also encourage and reward meaningful intercultural engagement. It is a core university responsibility to actively foster a diverse cultural environment and to create opportunities for cultural learning beyond the classroom. Creating opportunities for domestic and international students to interact outside of the classroom is particularly useful.

You can teach effectively across cultures and enable dialogue and engagement by, for example:

- designing cross-cultural tasks which use and link with students’ knowledge and experience
- providing specific preparation and support for all students to develop their cross-cultural communication skills prior to and during group tasks
- ensuring appropriate support is available to develop all students’ academic and social language skills
- assessing the development of intercultural skills and individual students’ participation in intercultural group work at regular intervals
- talking to other staff teaching on the program about how they enable and encourage intercultural engagement
- involving specialists in teaching intercultural communication skills in the preparation of all students for cross-cultural group work
- assessing the process as well as the outcome of cross-cultural group assignments
- encouraging self reflection and self assessment by students as they engage in cross-cultural group assignments.

More examples of this principle in practice are provided in each Quick Guide.

## Principle 5: Be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence

Good teaching requires the ability to adapt methods and approaches, including those for assessment, to different contexts and student groups. Tasks that have worked well in one culturally diverse setting may not work well in another. Culturally inclusive teaching requires a certain amount of flexibility in planning and delivery and it assumes teachers respond to evidence showing a need for change.

Teachers who wish to check their effectiveness in working with students from diverse cultural backgrounds can consult evaluation data (routinely collected or as a one off for a particular issue) and can access the extensive literature available. Analysis of data by cultural group can provide insights. For example, it may show if students are unfairly disadvantaged because of their cultural background. This is especially important in relation to assessment.

Supplementing student evaluation with other data such as peer observation, feedback from specialists in teaching across cultures and one's own reflections can suggest adaptations to language, style and methods of delivery. Other aspects for review include assessment tasks and ways to use diversity as a resource.

You can teach effectively across cultures, remaining flexible and adaptable, by, for example:

- designing assignments that allow all students, regardless of their cultural background, to draw on their life experiences as they learn
- seeking regular feedback from colleagues on your effectiveness in upholding each of these Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures
- engaging with literature on teaching and learning across cultures
- experimenting with a variety of different approaches to teaching and monitoring their effectiveness with different groups of learners
- collecting evidence and advice on your effectiveness as a teacher of diverse cultural groups from a variety of sources
- seeking out colleagues from diverse backgrounds and discussing approaches to teaching with them
- getting feedback from transnational partner staff on course content and assessment task design, in particular on whether you have inadvertently unfairly disadvantaged students from cultural backgrounds different from your own.

More examples of this principle in practice are provided in each Quick Guide.

## Principle 6: Prepare students for life in a globalised world

Globalisation is an ongoing process. It has created a world that is both more connected and more divided, in which power and resources are not shared equally. Ethical action and social responsibility underpinned by understanding of and respect for other ways of knowing and ways of being are increasingly important. As graduates, today's students will take on roles as citizens and professionals in this interconnected world. Many will become leaders in their field.

Most universities have statements of graduate qualities or attributes related to global citizenship which connect with other graduate attribute statements. Using these to inform course and program design and review focusses attention on the development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes to thrive in the globalised world of the future.

If the curriculum is essentially ethnocentric in focus it is unlikely to challenge stereotypes, contribute to greater equality, enhance understanding and appreciation of other cultures and prepare students for the international, intercultural and global context of their future lives.

You can teach effectively across cultures and prepare students for life in a globalised world by, for example:

- critiquing the implicit assumptions of disciplinary perspectives and ways of knowing and encouraging your students to do the same
- developing your students' understanding of the requirements of professional practice and citizenship in a globalised world

- engaging with global problems and global issues and encouraging your students to critique these issues (including in assessment tasks)
- discussing the progressive development of the skills, knowledge and attitudes required of global citizens and professionals across the program informally with colleagues and as part of formal periodic course and program reviews
- making a commitment to the development of your own and your students' intercultural communication skills.

## Useful references

The following sources have informed the formulation of these principles, individually and holistically. Many contain detailed examples of these principles in practice in different cultures.

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# Learning and Teaching Across Cultures

## Using the Good Practice Principles and Quick Guides: Suggestions for University Managers and Leaders

This guide is for university leaders and managers. It provides guidance and suggestions on how to use the Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides to improve learning and teaching across cultures in faculties and strategically across a university. It supports the implementation of the Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides.

Cultural and linguistic diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception. Universities have a responsibility to cater to the learning needs of all students. Diversity in the classroom creates challenges and opportunities for teaching staff and students. In 2010 the Office for Learning and Teaching commissioned the International Education Association of Australia to develop a set of Good Practice Principles and supporting 'Quick Guides' to support the quality of teaching and learning across cultures in Australian Universities.

The Good Practice Principles, the Quick Guides and the suggestions for their use are evidence-based. They draw on current literature and on relevant findings from projects funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council from 2006-2012. You can find full summaries of these projects in the Good Practice Report Learning and Teaching Across Cultures available at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-good-practice-report-learning-and-teaching-across-cultures-2011>. The suggestions are also informed by discussions at a symposium attended by 80 participants from universities across Australia in May 2013. The symposium report is available from [ieaa.org.au/ltac-symposium](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac-symposium).

The Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides are available from [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

### The Good Practice Principles:

- Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will **focus on students as learners**
- Principle 2: Good teaching across cultures will **respect and adjust for diversity**
- Principle 3: Good teaching across cultures will **provide context-specific information and support**
- Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will **enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement**
- Principle 5: Good teaching across cultures will be **adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence**
- Principle 6: Good teaching across cultures will **prepare students for life in a globalised world**

One Quick Guide provides a detailed description of all six principles. See Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures, [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

## The Quick Guides

Seven Quick Guides discuss these principles in practice providing a list of ‘things to look for’ and guidance on implementation.

### Quick Guides are available on the following topics:

- Assessment
- Curriculum Design
- Developing English Language Skills
- Managing Group Work
- Professional Development
- Student Services
- Teaching

Each Quick Guide focuses specifically on catering for cultural and linguistic diversity in that topic area. The guides may be used to audit and affirm current practice and/or to identify areas for additional effort or activity.

### Using the Quick Guides Strategically: some recommendations and suggestions

The Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides (hereinafter referred to as ‘Principles and Guides’) are resources designed to improve learning and teaching and will be most likely to achieve this function if they are introduced strategically, with careful support and institutional resources. Here are ideas about how you might introduce, use and support the adoption of the ideas and approaches outlined in the Quick Guides.

#### 1. Support implementation of the Quick Guides

Learning and teaching across cultures is complex. The Principles and Guides can provide general guidance but will not be effective as stand-alone resources. While it might seem tempting to simply upload them to a website, this approach is unlikely to change practice. On the other hand, offering support and guidance to interpret what the Guides suggest and to enact them locally might. You could provide support and guidance by:

- organizing moderated discussion of different Guides at school and program level, perhaps as part of a scheduled or regular meeting
- including discussion of each principle in professional development workshops. Workshops could be departmental or university-wide although the latter offer the additional benefit of cross-disciplinary learning
- using events, discussions and interactions with staff to identify champions and leading teachers. Once spotted, you might support these people to build communities of practice on the theme of teaching across cultures.

#### 2. Aim for small changes that have a big impact

Small changes to the way in which we teach and assess can have an impact that far exceeds the energy required to make them. The small but powerful changes can be difficult to identify, so help staff find them and to track and evaluate their effect(s). You could, for example:

- gather and disseminate examples of small changes that teachers have made. Make sure the accounts include evidence of impact on students’ learning
- record staff interviews describing changes and impacts
- record interviews with students from a range of different backgrounds talking about how small changes in teaching across cultures have had an impact on their learning.

### **3. Work within and across disciplines**

Teaching staff are more likely to see the relevance of examples that are discipline and context specific. They can also learn from cross-disciplinary conversations around teaching. To foster intra-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary discussions, you might:

- draw staff attention to the way in which the Guides could be used to address a particular issue in a subject, unit or module they teach or coordinate
- encourage teachers in different disciplines to develop discipline-specific examples of each principle in practice (a ‘third column’). For example, if the Guide on assessment suggests a certain strategy, then psychology teachers could show how this could operate or already operates in their discipline
- select a range of examples from the ‘third column’ idea described above, for dissemination across the university
- organise a mini-conference for the department or for the university as a whole at which staff showcase examples of the Principles and Guides in action.

### **4. Recognise and reward best practice**

When practice finds a way into performance review and promotion, this sends a clear signal of what is valued by the institution. The Principles and the Guides can be used as a reference point for creating criteria for judging policies and practice. You could demonstrate value and reward good practice by:

- providing teaching awards related to each of the Guides and/or Principles
- using the Principles as the basis for the development of promotion criteria related to teaching
- including reference to the Principles in guidelines for peer review of teaching.

### **5. Engage all teaching staff**

Teaching staff and students come from diverse backgrounds and have a variety of prior experiences, skills, knowledge and values. Both teachers and students need to be skilful navigators of teaching and learning across cultural boundaries. You encourage effective teaching and learning if you:

- incorporate discussion of the Principles and Guides in staff induction programs. Participants could be invited to share examples from their teaching
- ensure transnational partner staff and casual tutors have opportunities equivalent to those for tenured teaching staff to discuss good teaching and learning across cultures. For all, this needs to be part of ongoing professional development
- use the Principles and the Guides to inform policy and funding decisions, especially in relation to student services and staff development.

### **6. Link with other policies and priorities**

There are many ways in which the Principles can be linked to institutional strategic goals and priorities. Linkage can help to minimize effort and maximize results across the institution. For example you could:

- tap into motivations to change curriculum such as improving retention and success rates
- connect the Principles with specific strategic priorities such as the development of graduate attributes and internationalisation
- connect the Principles with specific policy priorities such as assessment and moderation.

**Good Practice Principles in Practice:  
Teaching Across Cultures**

**A Quick Guide to Assessment**

# Good Practice Principles in Practice: Teaching Across Cultures

## A Quick Guide to Assessment

### Introduction

This guide on assessment is intended for teaching staff and for those who support the learning of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Cultural diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception in Australian universities. Culture is not only defined by nationality or ethnicity. The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people. Cultures are most often recognised by shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and affective understandings. These are learned through a process of socialization. However, within different cultural groups, individuals are unique. Meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication within and across cultural groups. Cultural learning is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process for students and teachers. Cultural diversity in the student population has a significant impact on teaching and learning.

This guide draws on current literature on learning and teaching across cultures, on findings from relevant projects funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council from 2006-2012. You can find full summaries of these projects in the Good Practice Report Learning and Teaching Across Cultures available at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-good-practice-report-learning-and-teaching-across-cultures-2011>.

This guide is one of a suite of Quick Guides on topics of particular relevance to learning and teaching across cultures. Other guides are available from [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

### The Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures

This guide is organised around six principles of good practice for teaching across cultures. Each guide interprets the principle in practice.

- Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will **focus on students as learners**
- Principle 2: Good teaching across cultures will **respect and adjust for diversity**
- Principle 3: Good teaching across cultures will **provide context-specific information and support**
- Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will **enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement**
- Principle 5: Good teaching across cultures will be **adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence**
- Principle 6: Good teaching across cultures will **prepare students for life in a globalised world**

You can find a detailed description of each Principle at [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

In this guide, good practice principles are interpreted for assessment. The focus is on catering for cultural and linguistic diversity in university classrooms. This guide may be used to evaluate current activities and identify areas for improvement as well as examples of best practice.

## Principles into practice: assessment

### Principle 1: Focus on students as learners

Assessment tests what students have learned (assessment of learning) and it drives students' learning (assessment for learning). It checks their discipline-specific knowledge and skills (with the latter often the primary object of the assessment). Assessment also confirms students' understanding of what they are required to do to meet the assessment requirements. Students 'assessment literacy' is often overlooked as a significant part of learning to master assessment in university.

Assessment is challenging for all students. For those from culturally diverse backgrounds, mastering assessment strategies and approaches can present particular issues. Methods and standards may differ from those they have previously encountered in their prior studies in Australia or overseas. Some students will have had little, if any, experience of being assessed in English. How can assessors focus on diverse students as learners of content and learners of assessment skills?

#### What to look for

**Teachers are using recognised good practice in discipline-specific teaching**

[See A Quick Guide for Teachers](#)

**Programs are designed so that learners are taught and practise necessary skills before they are needed for assessment**

*"Clearly articulate to students, in written form, the requirements of the task, provide explicit definitions of generic skills being developed and assessed, provide templates indicating weightings and details of assessment for each task, provide specific, formative feedback" (PPS-43, p. 81).\**

Assessment tasks are structurally aligned with what students are doing and learning in class.

Skills such as critical reading and writing, application of theory in practice, use of examples as evidence and structuring an argument are not presumed to be present at enrolment.

Students are given specific guidance on how to structure an 'essay', a 'position paper', or a 'case study' in the discipline. Teachers who need assistance with providing this type of guidance look for resources and guidance from specialists within the university, such as academic language and learning staff.

There is guidance on referencing protocols. Expectations for citation and source use are embedded within assessment task descriptions and/or course materials.

Students for whom English is an additional language are provided with specific feedback on and support in the development of their use of discipline-specific and academic language.

*"Use a planning tool to link intended learning outcomes, graduate attributes, learning activities and assessment tasks and weightings" (See example in CG6-37, p. 72).*

**The connection between what is taught and what is assessed is made clear**

Whilst all students report the paramount importance of assessment, only some will see how lecture material, seminar activities and personal research are linked to assessment via examinations or coursework. Links need to be made frequently and explicitly. One way is by stating connections in lectures; another is by providing a rationale for readings that explain their use in subsequent examinations.

Strategies for revision are discussed and explained. Revision stresses the use and application of knowledge and students' capacity to evaluate its significance, rather than the reproduction of memorised facts.

**Program-level assessment tasks and standards keep pace with students' evolving levels of competence and understanding throughout the program**

As students become more familiar with the discipline and are more competent users of English, standards and expectations are also modified. Most changes include higher demands and expectations of more accurate and complex language use.

\* Quote from ALTC/OLT project. Please refer to back page of this guide for project details.

## 2

### Principle 2: Respect and adjust for diversity

Students' diverse previous experiences, their varied underpinning knowledge and developing language skills will pose particular challenges for fairness to all and for maintaining standards. What adjustments to assessment might ensure that all have a chance for success?

#### What to look for

**Teachers and program designers recognise that assessment methods differ in various academic cultures**

*It is sometimes difficult to understand the "... cultural, moral and ethical differences in academic writing" (CG8-766, p. 22).\**

Teachers are aware of forms of assessment in their students' previous educational settings; they know that the range, purpose and timing of assessments varies in different cultural contexts.

Students are provided with opportunities to seek clarification around all aspects of assessment requirements early in the course.

Group work is likely to be particularly novel for some groups of students. For example, students who studied outside Australia before starting university may have never used this method and some Australian learning environments seldom if ever ask students to collaborate for an assessed task. Group work will need careful management ([See A Quick Guide to Managing Group Work](#)).

**Teachers anticipate and manage commonly occurring problems**

*"Students want teachers to provide examples, models and culturally specific illustrations" (CG8-766, p. 7).\**

*Early in the course give students an ungraded task with a focus on formative feedback, advise those needing it of the support available (PPS-43, p. 82).\**

Teachers provide examples of coursework questions along with sample answers of variable quality to clarify what is expected. These exemplars are specifically designed to help students understand what is required as well as grade threshold standards.

The program includes a range of assessment tasks (such as portfolios, simulations, case-based evaluations, presentations and self and peer assessment). The benefits of this are that students can demonstrate what they have learned in different ways using a range of language and communication skills. The problem of unfamiliarity amongst some students needs careful management. Care is needed to introduce novel formats slowly, to provide exemplars, give time for opportunities to practise and avoid higher-order complex methods towards the beginning of programs.

Formative feedback on academic writing stresses correct ways to acknowledge sources and how to use referencing systems.

Teachers provide pre-exam practice and feedback, especially in the early stages of the program.

Teachers stress the value of starting promptly on coursework which is due in weeks or months. A sample time line is provided to assist those students who have had little or no experience of self managing multiple assessment tasks.

## 3

### Principle 3: Provide context-specific information and support

The ways in which teachers describe, discuss and design assessment briefs can be crucial in ensuring students are clear on what is expected. Context-specific information also helps all students meet expectations when completing assessment tasks but may be especially helpful for those with little or no previous experience of commonly used assessment tasks in Australian universities.

#### What to look for

**Guidance is clear, specific and appropriate to the learning context**

Structural aspects such as word count, referencing system and use of sub headings are stated.

When feedback is given, it refers frequently and specifically to assessment criteria. Formative feedback concentrates on what needs to be done rather than what is wrong.

Information and instructions are provided using a variety of forms and media.

*Assessment does not have to be identical in different locations but must be comparable, linked to the learning objectives and assess the same knowledge and skills (PPB-906, p. 23).\**

# 3

## What to look for

**Programs provide opportunities for checking understanding of assessment requirements**

Students know when and how they can ask questions. Academic writing skills include tips on decoding questions. What is the assessor looking for?

Class tasks prepare for and reflect on assessment items.

Early assessment(s) are both formative or summative. They alert students to specific gaps and strengths and highlight what is expected. Feedback includes advice on plagiarism. [See A Quick Guide for Teachers and A Quick Guide to Developing English Language Skills](#) for more advice on avoiding plagiarism.

*"There are different standards amongst academics on what constitutes plagiarism and academics need to be aware of the confusion this creates amongst students" (CG8-766, p. 22).\**

*Consider providing student access to programs like Turnitin' to allow students to check their own work for plagiarism (PPS-43, p. 85).\**

**Information on assessment is sensitive to students' developing language skills**

A percentage of the mark for all students is allocated to English language capability. The specific percentage and expectations in relation to use of English are clearly stated. The [Quick Guide to Developing English Language Skills](#) offers suggestions for reaching consistency in language standards and on assessing and providing feedback on language skills that support language development. In general, sentence level issues are not the most important. Feedback on paragraph structure, how ideas are organised and the overall structure of the text are more useful.

# 4

## Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement

Within assessment itself, especially in group tasks, intercultural dialogue is an implicit and at times, an explicit goal. It may be taught, supported and assessed as a specific course and program requirement. Staff and students' ability to engage in intercultural dialogue facilitates most aspects of assessment involving culturally diverse students. It is important that teachers support and manage dialogue amongst culturally diverse groups of students with care.

## What to look for

**The teacher creates a supportive learning environment for interaction**

*"A lot of my students do not really know how to start talking to other students in their first class. I see that as part of my work to break down that barrier among students from the very first class" (Academic, CG8-725, p. 13).\**

Interaction is a frequent and normal aspect of teaching, learning and assessment. [See A Quick Guide for Teachers](#) for suggestions on how to encourage and manage interaction in the classroom.

All students are required to complete a minimum amount of assessed group work as part of their degree program. For assessment, all students are prepared for and supported in the process of working in culturally diverse groups before they are required to work in such groups to create assessed work ([See A Quick Guide to Managing Group Work](#)).

Intercultural skills are taught and assessed at different year levels in the program ([See A Quick Guide for Teachers and A Quick Guide to Managing Group Work](#)). Programs, provide multiple opportunities for practice in a safe environment and feedback is given so that students progressively develop their skills as they progress through the course of study.

**Assessment tasks are set so as to develop cultural sensitivity and awareness amongst students**

Assessment tasks are not culturally context-specific. For example, a question in a sociology examination would not assume knowledge about how Australians generally resolve arguments unless this has been specifically taught. A question in a sociology examination about adoption laws would only assume this occurred within an Australian context if this had been stated in the course syllabus.

Tasks draw upon intercultural wisdom in the group. For example, students might be asked to compare and reflect on various ways they have seen a particular problem addressed. Who takes the lead in seeking a solution and why was that person the most appropriate?

Where appropriate, tasks allow students to provide each other with information on their cultural perspectives and to utilise previous knowledge and experiences to complete the assessment task.

## 5

## Principle 5: Be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence

As with all other aspects of teaching, teachers need to monitor the impact of assessment on students' learning. Learning tasks can be designed to gauge the effectiveness of teaching approaches on students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Teachers can then compare student performance on these deliberately designed tasks. Where evidence suggests that students from particular backgrounds are disadvantaged by an assessment approach, it may be appropriate to provide additional support; it might also prompt changes in teaching and/or assessment practices.

### What to look for

Teachers critically reflect on their teaching and assessment practices

Feedback from students on teaching approaches specifically invites comments on approaches to assessment.

Teachers keep abreast of research and participate in staff development on matters related to teaching and assessment.

At the program level, there are opportunities for reaching consensus on standards

Teaching staff discuss at what stages in the program 'reading through' awkward language is appropriate and when students will be required to correct and/or seek assistance from academic language and learning staff.

Moderation includes discussion of real and/or simulated work. It is a regular part of course team discussions prior to critical assessment points in courses.

*"Where programs are taught in multiple locations, including offshore, a moderation process is used to ensure the assessment is 'fair, valid and reliable' (PP8-906, p. 17)."*

Staff avoid practices such as penalising students once for poor language, then a second time for weak structure, when a student's lack of academic vocabulary has meant the reader cannot discern the student's organisation of the work.

## 6

## Principle 6: Preparing students for life in a globalised world

When designing assessment tasks teachers encourage students to consider the global application and impact of course content and the impact of culture and language on disciplinary knowledge and professional practice.

### What to look for

Assessment encourages global awareness

Program documentation states the knowledge, skills and attributes graduates will demonstrate. In professional accreditation programs, skills and knowledge are specific to working within the profession.

The program teaches skills for global citizenship

Students are taught to be reflective and use this ability in assessment tasks.

The program develops and assesses students' global awareness and citizenship.

The program accredits students' capabilities for life in a globalised world

All students are assumed to leave with the necessary capabilities to exercise global citizenship responsibilities.

Assessment items are designed to shape students' global awareness and intercultural skills

Assessment items are culturally inclusive and where appropriate, have a global perspective. Tasks use and value students' experiences before and after study in an Australian university.

Assessment tasks test students' ability to gather and apply knowledge in and across disciplines in a globalised world.

Assessment items promote learning and skills beyond the task itself. They are intrinsically useful and encourage life-long learning.

Programs explicitly aim to create students who are reflective about and able to move between different systems

Some assessment tasks in the program test actions and decisions where context is important. Students must show they deal with multiple competing national, cultural and/or linguistic perspectives.

*"Use reflective written tasks to (get students to) analyse critically and reflect on their own assumptions, values and beliefs..." (CG8-725, p. 19)."*

## Related OLT Projects

CG8-766, *Investigating the efficacy of culturally specific academic literacy and academic honesty resources for Chinese students*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-efficacy-culturally-specific-academic-literacy-vu-2010>.

PP8-906, *Moderation for fair assessment in transnational teaching and learning*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-moderation-fair-assessment-unisa-2008>.

CG8-725, *Finding common ground: enhancing interaction between domestic and international students*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-enhancing-domestic-international-melbourne-2008>.

PPS-43, *Assessing students unfamiliar with assessment practices in Australian universities*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-assessing-students-unfamiliar-rmit-2005>.

## Key References

Boud D 2009, 'Reframing assessment as if learning were important' in D Boud & N Falchikov (eds), *Rethinking assessment in higher education: learning for the longer term*, Routledge, London, pp. 14-26.

Chalmers D & Partridge L 2013, 'Teaching graduate attributes and academic skills', in L Hunt & D Chalmers, *University teaching in focus: a learning-centred approach*, ACER Press, Camberwell, Victoria, pp. 56-91.

Nicol D 2007, 'Principles of assessment design and feedback: theory and practice', *Assessment design for learner responsibility*, <http://www.reap.ac.uk>, pp. 1-9.

**Good Practice Principles in Practice:  
Teaching Across Cultures**

**A Quick Guide to Curriculum Design**

# Good Practice Principles in Practice: Teaching Across Cultures

## A Quick Guide to Curriculum Design

### Introduction

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### The Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures

This guide is organised around six principles of good practice for teaching across cultures. Each principle is explained then illustrated in action. Here, good practice is interpreted in relation to curriculum design.

Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will **focus on students as learners**

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You can find a detailed description of each Principle at [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

The focus is specifically on catering for cultural and linguistic diversity in university classrooms. This guide may be used to evaluate current activities and identify areas for improvement as well as examples of best practice.

## Principle 1: Focus on students as learners

Students do not start university with the same skills, knowledge or experience of the world. Curriculum design needs to work with and value students' diverse experiences, skills and learning preferences. Curriculum decisions are most effective when discussed and coordinated at the program level.

All students will benefit from regular and appropriate feedback on how they are developing international and intercultural competencies.

### What to look for

**The program is designed in line with inclusive learning practices**

**There are opportunities for all students to develop international and intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes**

*It's important to align the informal and formal curriculum to enable skills to be developed and practised in both (CG6-37, p. 2).\**

An inclusive curriculum is relevant, meaningful and accessible for all students regardless of their linguistic or cultural background. Because this is difficult to do staff who design programs are provided with information and assistance to put inclusive practice principles into practice.

Curriculum is defined in the widest sense to include everything that shapes the student's learning experience. Formal opportunities are used (learning outcomes, course content, student placements, examination questions, etc.); informal opportunities are acknowledged (social events, volunteering, meetings with students, careers workshops, etc.). The hidden curriculum is also significant but less available for manipulation – for example, how the seats are organised in a lecture theatre, the ways teachers and students communicate. The formal, informal and hidden curricula are all considered during the planning process.

Students are alerted from early in the program that they will need to develop international and intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes. Explanations include a rationale.

Planning takes into account students' willingness and ability to develop and change over time. All students' identity, awareness and competence will evolve.

**Program level planning encourages cohort identity**

**Learning outcomes for individual modules are planned in line with progression towards agreed exit-level capabilities ('graduate attributes')**

**Skill development is embedded into program design**

Intercultural interaction is encouraged both as important in its own right and as a way to enhance learning across the program.

Responsibility for developing students' intercultural knowledge and skills is shared across the program.

Students' progress toward graduate attributes will vary, in part due to their diverse entry level skills, knowledge and experiences. Programs, courses and assessment need to be designed sensitively to reflect this variety.

Teaching staff are aware of support services, use them and encourage students to do the same. Teachers consult support staff with responsibility for learning (for example, librarians, study skills advisors, language teachers and writing specialists) on strategies to develop skills across the program. The same service staff also help ensure assessment tasks are clear and inclusive. For example, language specialists can suggest how to write multiple choice questions that test content knowledge rather than student vocabulary.

Teachers provide feedback to students on how to improve their skills.

**Early, close student monitoring encourages positive learning behaviour**

The early stages of a program serve as a transition period to a new learning environment during which support is provided.

Teachers recognize the value of knowing students as individuals, especially early in the program. The effort to get to know students is shared within all courses and across the program as a whole.

Teachers recognize the value of learning and using students' names. The fact that this is impossible in very large groups does not negate the significance of using names whenever possible.

Teachers intervene where negative behaviour is displayed.

Attendance is monitored and triggers action and intervention when students are at risk.

Students are provided with a range of options for asking questions of teaching staff. These include time after lectures where possible, in seminars, during scheduled office hours, on line and through course representatives. Students are made aware of these options.

\* Quote from ALTC/OLT project. Please refer to back page of this guide for project details.

## What to look for

All students are assisted to broaden the range of learning strategies that they employ

Teachers encourage students to become more aware of the value of different learning strategies and help students identify their particular preferences.

A range of fit-for-purpose learning strategies are modeled and encouraged.

Learning is approached as a process rather than a product or the accumulation of discrete facts and ideas.

*"Appreciate that, in many cases, students are more likely to behave as individuals in their approach to learning and assessment, rather than as a homogenous group based on their cultural background" (PPS-43, p. 7).\**

Across the program assessment tasks and standards keep pace with students' evolving levels of competence and understanding

Standards and expectations in relation to the use of professional and academic English develop throughout the program. As students' expected performance improves, teaching and assessment reflect this improvement by also increasing expectations and standards. The aim is to ensure students achieve exit-level competence by the time they graduate. Students leave as confident and competent in the communication skills required for professional practice or further study.

Assessment tasks and marking criteria are reviewed, year on year, to ensure progressive development.

Generic academic skills (critical thinking, academic writing, research capabilities, communication skills, etc.) are addressed in teachers' feedback alongside discipline-specific and professional skills as appropriate. Teachers take account of good practice guidance on making feedback useful. For example, comments are specific, supported by examples from the student's work and focused on future improvements.

Opportunities for self and peer assessment are included in the program, guided by appropriate criteria.

*"Recognise that improvements to accommodate one grouping or classification of students inevitably leads to improvements for all students" (PPS-43, p. 7).*

## Principle 2: Respecting and adjusting for diversity

2

Students in diverse classrooms bring individual previous experiences, varied knowledge and developing language skills. This variety poses particular challenges for teachers. How should they ensure fairness to all? What can they do to maintain standards? What adjustments to curriculum design can ensure all students have a chance for success?

The challenge is to discover how the cohort as a whole can use, value and draw upon students' multiple perspectives and values. Curricular adjustments can turn apparent diversity problems into assets by maximizing opportunities for students and teachers to learn about their own and others' knowledge, beliefs and values.

## What to look for

Diversity is used as a valuable and positive aspect of the student demographic

Examples, case studies and assessment tasks are designed to use and build upon students' previous experiences and to develop all students' awareness of multiple perspectives. Group work tasks are designed to specifically highlight the importance of context-specific problem solving and decision making (See [A Quick Guide to Group Work](#)).

*"Consider... diversity as an opportunity to develop a truly global approach to educating... students" (PPS-43, p. 7).*

There are opportunities for students to identify individual strengths and weaknesses.

Diagnostic activities are scheduled early in the program for all students. Students use the outcomes to understand their strengths and weaknesses as learners in general and as new entrants to the discipline and program. When discussing skills and expectations teachers use language that acknowledges there are many ways to be a successful student, but that there are particular ways that are expected in this program. Students' previous educational experiences are acknowledged and discussed in relation to current requirements. Feedback in early assessment activities is focused on language skills as well as discipline specific knowledge.

Students evaluate themselves in relation to program requirements and expectations

Data are collected and used to evaluate the appropriateness of entry level requirements, including English language entry level requirements. When programs are redesigned, adjustments take findings into account (See [A Quick Guide to Developing English Language Skills](#)).

'Getting to know you' activities are frequent and planned

Planning decisions take account of available accessible support and where this is deemed insufficient, designers advocate for more. Support is geared to meeting students' individual needs and helps them plan their own development. There is a focus on interacting across cultures from the first day of class. Activities to structure interaction include a rationale for making the effort. Where appropriate, students are alerted to cross cultural skills as part of their prospective profession. Students are able to describe how social interaction across cultures supports and enhances their own learning.

*"Be aware of student learning preferences, for example, refugee students may prefer collaborative learning involving group discussions but their participation may be limited by their lack of confidence in their language skills (CG7-496).*

## 2

### What to look for

#### Skills are taught, practised and assessed

*Students respond to learning opportunities which are scaffolded, 'just in time' and delivered over longer periods of time so that information can be synthesized and applied within their specific disciplines (CG7-496).\**

Students are not assumed to arrive with a full repertoire of academic and professional skills. Students are helped to hone skills, identify those which are less useful in their new educational setting and learn new ones which are more appropriate to their new context.

Support staff for academic and language learning are called upon by program and course designers to identify and implement strategies to embed the development of academic writing and research skills. Interventions are placed in teaching activities at all levels of the program as necessary.

#### A range of assessment tasks are included in course and program design

Students are provided with a variety of options to demonstrate their learning across the program (such as portfolios, simulations, case-based evaluations, presentations, self and peer assessment).

Teachers are aware of forms of assessment commonly used in their students' previous educational settings.

Exemplars of each form of assessment are provided.

Students are given feedback on early attempts at demonstrating their learning. Early feedback is especially useful for novel forms of assessment.

## 3

### Principle 3: Provide context-specific information and support

Students in different programs and locations will require information and support that is tailored to their needs and to the context within which they are studying. Planners themselves will need access to support and information that helps them to do this in different contexts – offshore, onshore and online, for example. In turn, they need to think about how to provide context-specific information to the students on the program they are designing and in its constituent courses. Much good practice exists on how to design programs that meet the learning needs of diverse students.

### What to look for

#### Where staff development is provided on curriculum design, it takes account of the context

Professional development of teachers includes guidance on good practice in effective teaching of diverse student cohorts in different teaching contexts (e.g. on-line, in class, offshore, undergraduate, postgraduate, research).

Location-specific teaching preparation is provided for academic staff prior to them teaching in a transnational program.

Teachers are aware of the dangers of stereotyping, making assumptions and over-generalising on the basis of students' language skills and cultural background.

It is clear to casual and permanent staff where, how and from whom to seek advice on professional, cross cultural or other aspects of program design and delivery.

#### International and intercultural learning outcomes are related to the discipline and professions

*Recognise the particular imperatives in each discipline for developing intercultural skills (CG6-37, see p. 111, where you will find a taxonomy for planning).\**

Planners use systematic ways to scaffold students' developing competence in intercultural communication. Planning happens across the program and at all levels.

The program includes assessment tasks which check students' international and intercultural knowledge and skills. Tasks are designed to be relevant to the discipline and to students' prospective profession.

Staff are provided with guidance on writing and setting assessments which are sensitive to students' developing language competence and understanding.

# 3

## What to look for

**All students are prepared for intercultural interactions**

All students are trained in intercultural communication prior to the requirement to work in intercultural groups.

Where students are required to work on assessment tasks in intercultural groups, the process as well as the product is assessed (See [A Quick Guide to Managing Group Work](#)).

**Program design takes account of learning support and referral services**

Program designers, teaching staff and students are regularly consulted on the scope and relevance of the services provided to students ([A Quick Guide to Working with Student Learning Services](#)).

Someone checks regularly that the students are given up-to-date information on academic and language support services.

Examination tasks and coursework are sensitive to students' developing language capability. Task requirements are explained in detail and assessment criteria are clear and explicit (See [A Quick Guide to Assessment](#)).

# 4

## Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement

This principle works at two levels: within the program team itself and within the student group. Within the program team, members of the team will be diverse, bringing multiple perspectives and different values to the planning process. The process of curriculum design and review will be inclusive of and value team diversity.

For students, interaction helps them discover each other's perspectives. Multiple perspectives, in turn, help students realize how important taking the context into account can be. The importance placed on context varies between disciplines. In the so called 'soft sciences', where context is at the centre of disciplinary knowledge and skills, interaction helps students become context-aware. In the hard sciences, context is often viewed as being less important, though it's relevance to understanding and applying new knowledge never disappears completely. Without context awareness, learning is unlikely to transform students' understanding or build skills appropriate to the global, interconnected world in which students will live and work.

Dialogue and interaction are often difficult, especially across cultures and will require skill and resilience to manage moments of confrontation, misunderstanding and confusion. Students and staff will need to be helped and supported to turn such moments into those which support learning. Programs are the vehicle for designing the context-specific knowledge, skills and attitudes students will need to develop effective intercultural skills.

## What to look for

**Teachers and students share experiences**

**Experiences are treated as valuable resources for learning**

*Harness the potential of shared knowledge (CG8-725).\**

The program team models and exemplifies productive intercultural interaction. Team members refer to and draw upon their own and their peers' cultural and linguistic diversity. Teachers who have particular interest in and knowledge about cultural and language diversity issues are recruited and participate in program planning.

Teachers follow up statements about the value of diversity with activities and tasks which overtly use and value students' diverse experiences and knowledge (See [A Quick Guide to Assessment, Group Work and Teaching](#)). The benefits as well as the challenges of engaging in intercultural dialogue are specifically outlined in course and program materials.

Teachers plan activities and tasks in ways that are sensitive to students' needs to feel confident and unthreatened, especially at the start of a program. Confidence is a key factor in feeling able to work safely and effectively with other students.

Cross-cultural dialogue is choreographed and managed by teachers who are aware of and sensitive to students' prior experiences.

## 4

## What to look for

**Interaction is planned into module design, projects and assessment tasks as appropriate**

**Interaction is treated as a normal and valuable way to learn but also, one which requires planning and support**

Tasks are designed in such a way that interaction across cultures is necessary in order to complete the task successfully.

Students are guided to become aware of and work with difference without resorting to ranking, judging or otherwise acting as if the task is to decide whose perspective is 'best'.

No one way of doing or seeing things is presented as 'universal'. The value of different approaches and perspectives is discussed.

Group work assignments are designed to include cultural knowledge where appropriate (See [A Quick Guide to Group Work](#)).

*"We had to go around and talk to everyone in the class to decide who is in our group for the project. Each group had to have people from at least two different backgrounds"*  
(Student CG8-725, p. 15).\*

**Students are expected to regularly reflect upon and show awareness of cultural and language differences**

Students take responsibility for ensuring their style of communication is effective and respectful of those from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Students recognize that everyone in a conversation helps ensure understanding. Responsibility for checking meaning is shared and includes those who are native speakers of English and those who are using English as an additional language. Teachers model this.

Students' communicate with people with various language capabilities and accents over the life of the program. (See [A Quick Guide to Developing English Language Skills](#)).

Self and peer assessment of communication skills is incorporated into tasks across the program.

Students reflect upon the utility of their communication skills for life after graduation.

## 5

**Principle 5: Be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence**

There are many ways to evaluate the impact of curriculum design on students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Individual teachers and university managers can collect data both systematically and as one-off exercises to investigate a particular event or concern. When the student cohort is diverse, data can be collected which looks for patterns in achievement and/or impacts of program design decisions or course interventions. Evidence can be geared to identifying impacts for particular groups or cohorts. Evidence from multiple sources needs to be carefully analysed, cross-referenced and then used to modify or adapt curriculum design.

## What to look for

**Evaluation and review processes are in place and the results are monitored**

*"Different cohorts rely on different combinations of support networks, depending on their diversity, multiple responsibilities and commitments"*  
(CG6-38, p. 10).\*

Evaluation at course level specifically focusses on inclusive teaching practices.

The curricula of individual courses and the total program are checked regularly for accessibility and relevance.

Evaluation and review are regular, ongoing and iterative. Changes both anticipate and respond to feedback and emerging themes.

Program leaders and their teams regularly discuss the results of evaluation and review any issues that need to be addressed.

Results of course and program evaluation activities are used to shape future curriculum design and professional development.

Data collected at program and course level feeds into university level review and planning.

## What to look for

Curriculum design is linked to institutional goals related to internationalisation and the development of intercultural competence and global citizenship

Data is collected at course or program level on satisfaction, success and post-university use of awards.

Senior management are aware of, supportive and involved in responding to the results of data analysis.

Academic staff are rewarded for performance and innovation that responds to data analysis

Adaptability, flexibility and responsiveness to data are rewarded.

Performance reviews include discussion and documentation of the extent to which the program supports coherence, quality and consistency in students' experiences and achievements, regardless of their linguistic and cultural background.

Sufficient resources are provided to support high quality program design and delivery.

Workload allocations provide sufficient time for data analysis, curriculum review and redesign.

## Principle 6: Prepare students for life in a globalised world

Nations and their peoples interact with each other now more than ever before. In their future lives as professionals and citizens, today's students will contribute to this globalised world. Universities have a responsibility to ensure students graduate with the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to make positive, ethical contributions as citizens and professionals to their global, national and local communities. Most universities have statements of graduate qualities or attributes related to global citizenship which, if they are used to inform course and program design, will ensure that diversity in the classroom is seen as a valuable resource to develop the skills and knowledge that staff and students need to thrive in a globalised world.

### What to look for

Decisions on curriculum are shaped by a shared understanding among the program team as to what globalisation means in the context of the discipline and related professions

Time is routinely set aside for discussion, interaction and consultation on program goals in relation to global citizenship. This might occur, for example, as a specific part of regular annual program review.

Program goals related to preparing students for life in a globalised world are accepted, supported and owned by the whole program team. They are also clearly articulated and communicated to all staff and to students.

Graduate Attributes related to the development of international and intercultural knowledge are described with specific reference to the important values, skills and knowledge of the discipline and related professions

An agreed and appropriate Graduate Attributes profile which incorporates international and intercultural skills and knowledge is used to shape program design.

Program learning outcomes include, for example, that graduates are able to:

- identify global issues in the discipline and related professions, address global questions
- work in a globalised workplace
- communicate effectively in a culturally diverse workplace
- collaborate internationally on research and knowledge generation projects effectively
- work productively in a variety of roles in multi-cultural work teams
- communicate complex information related to the discipline and related professions with culturally and linguistically diverse clients, partners and colleagues
- generate new knowledge drawing upon diverse values and perspectives.

*Link curriculum planning and review to other relevant drivers or levers for change (eg. graduate attributes, accreditation or audits, guidelines for teaching and learning assessment policies) (CG6-37, p. 2).\**

## What to look for

**A range of stakeholders inform curriculum design decisions**

Alumni and employers are included on advisory groups or consulted in other ways on the knowledge, skills and attitudes graduates require in a globalised world.

Their views are incorporated into program design.

*"Seek feedback from employers as to the skills and attributes they want in new graduates, the strengths and weaknesses they see and any areas of deficiency in generic capabilities" (PPS-43, p. 75).\**

**Real world cases, problems and tasks are included in the curriculum**

Cases, problems and tasks are authentic, located in diverse contexts and challenge students to explore how approaches to the profession vary in different social and political conditions.

Teachers and students refer to global data, databases and/or research.

Teachers are assisted to develop and expand their own discipline specific knowledge of global and international professional issues.

Textbooks and resources include a diverse range of views from within the discipline; emerging paradigms are acknowledged and explored by staff and students.

**The development of graduate attributes is linked to both citizenship and employment**

Program-level learning outcomes relate to global citizenship, stewardship, addressing global problems and making the world a better place for all.

Careers services are embedded into program design. Students are given advice on tailoring CVs for different national contexts and assistance to develop the skills required to identify the expectations of employers in different national and cultural contexts.

*"Students in non-professional generalist degrees would benefit from the embedding of some kind of workplace experience and strategic career advice" (CG6-38, p. 11).\**

## Related OLT Projects

CG8-725, *Finding common ground: enhancing interaction between domestic and international students*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-enhancing-domestic-international-melbourne-2008>.

CG7-496, *Life: learning interactively for engagement*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-life-%E2%80%93-learning-interactively-murdoch-2007>.

PPS-43, *Assessing students unfamiliar with assessment practices in Australian universities*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-assessing-students-unfamiliar-rmit-2005>.

CG6-38, *Diversity: a longitudinal study of how student diversity relates to resilience and successful progression in a new generation university*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-diversity-longitudinal-study-how-ecu-2006>.

CG6-37, *Embedding the development of intercultural competence in business education*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-embedding-development-intercultural-sydney-2006>.

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**Good Practice Principles in Practice:  
Teaching Across Cultures**

**A Quick Guide to Developing  
English Language Skills**

# A Quick Guide to Developing English Language Skills

## Introduction

This guide is intended for teaching staff and for those who support the learning of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Cultural diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception in Australian universities. Culture is not only defined by nationality or ethnicity. The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people. Cultures are most often recognised by shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and affective understandings. These are learned through a process of socialization. However, within different cultural groups, individuals are unique. Meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication within and across cultural groups. Cultural learning is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process for students and teachers. Cultural diversity in the student population has a significant impact on teaching and learning.

This guide draws on current literature on learning and teaching across cultures, on findings from relevant projects funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council from 2006-2012. You can find full summaries of these projects in the Good Practice Report Learning and Teaching Across Cultures available at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-good-practice-report-learning-and-teaching-across-cultures-2011>.

This guide is one of a suite of Quick Guides on topics relevant to learning and teaching across cultures. Other guides are available from [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

## The Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures

This guide is organised around six principles of good practice for teaching across cultures. Each guide interprets the principles in practice.

- Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will **focus on students as learners**
- Principle 2: Good teaching across cultures will **respect and adjust for diversity**
- Principle 3: Good teaching across cultures will **provide context-specific information and support**
- Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will **enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement**
- Principle 5: Good teaching across cultures will be **adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence**
- Principle 6: Good teaching across cultures will **prepare students for life in a globalised world**

You can find a detailed description of each Principle at [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

In this guide the focus is on assisting students to develop their English language skills. It may be used to check and affirm current practice and/or to identify areas for additional effort or action.

## Principles into practice: developing students' English language skills

### Principle 1: Focus on students as learners

Students enrol in university courses to acquire knowledge and skills in a particular subject. Many study in English for the first time. Studying in English (as opposed to studying English) requires more than a good vocabulary and the ability to apply grammatical rules. University students must use English to understand ideas, interact with others, express their thoughts orally and in writing, construct arguments and understand complex texts. An increasing number of students in Australian universities and on accredited programs delivered on and off shore are studying in English as an additional language and they do so in a new cultural context, encountering assumptions and expectations daily which are unfamiliar and often surprising. Cultural unfamiliarity is important because language learning and culture are inextricably linked; students must understand them both to make sense of either. In addition, all newly enrolled students are learning the discourse of their chosen discipline.

All students, each in their individual ways, need practise in developing discipline-specific and tertiary-level language skills. All students have responsibilities for further developing their English language proficiency during their study at university. Some will need additional support for months (and possibly years) to become confident and capable users of English for reading, writing and speaking.

Support for language development cannot be the responsibility of individual content teachers working in isolation. The ideal arrangement involves collaboration between content teachers, program designers, language support staff, universities as a whole and the students themselves. All need to work together to ensure students achieve exit-level English language capabilities. Without planned and coordinated support, some students might fail to acquire the English language skills which are necessary for communication in the discipline, for professional employment and for effective communication in a world where English is increasingly regarded as an international language.

#### What to look for

**Students understand why ongoing English language development is important and what their responsibilities are**

Students are advised of their responsibilities as language learners prior to enrolment as well as post enrolment. Teachers and other academic staff are aware of their role in the development of students' English language skills.

Teachers have a good working relationship with academic language and learning staff ([See A Quick Guide to Working With Student Learning Services](#)).

**Programs are developed systematically to support students' English language development and to support language development in the discipline**

Exit-level competency in English language is stated in graduate attribute descriptors. Expectations about graduates' English language competence are appropriate for the discipline, tailored to the level of the exit award and sufficient for life after graduation, either within Australia or as citizens of a world where English functions as a global language.

Programs are designed to take account of students' needs to practise and develop language skills. Designers recognise that not all language issues occur at the beginning of the program. Students use more complex language and tackle more extended tasks in reading, writing and speaking as the program progresses. Students are rewarded for improving in a range of language competencies.

**The program team understands what entry-level English language scores signify and what they do not**

Entry requirements are set to ensure students have the English language proficiency and academic literacy necessary to start learning in their chosen discipline. English language entry scores are a marker of threshold ability for reading, writing, speaking and listening in English. They do not indicate graduate-level competence in English.

**Anyone who advocates for higher or lower entry scores does so from evidence**

Most language tests average all elements, giving them equal weight, thereby masking potential strengths and weaknesses in a student's language skills profile. Students may have underscored, perhaps because they were tired when tested. They will certainly be stressed by language demands on arrival at university and perhaps under-perform. In a small number of cases, entry scores are inauthentic and do not represent the named student's abilities.

*\*Writing reports is really difficult because sometimes we don't know how to organise our written English and how to research and how to present our ideas. That is the most challenging thing\*  
(Student, PPS-43, p. 63).\**

Increasingly students will enter from a pathway program, without a current test score.

Decisions to raise or lower entry requirements for English should be based on:

- tracking studies for the students admitted under current arrangements. Success and failure rates need to be inspected in detail
- presence or absence of remediation and support facilities (though in-session support should not justify lowering entry scores)
- the actual language demands of the program. Language specialist colleagues probably need to be involved in judging the course reading, writing, listening and speaking demands.

\* Quote from ALTC/OLT project. Please refer to back page of this guide for project details.

# 1

## What to look for

**Teachers teach for dual learning benefits: they teach content and devise learning activities for language learning**

All students will need to develop language skills, but with different emphasis. Content teachers can work with language support staff and others to support:

- entry-level English users for language enhancement
- developing students' skills to communicate confidently and effectively with native speakers and with other multi-lingual English speakers who have unfamiliar accents or who are still developing confidence and competence in the language
- all students learning the language of the discipline.

Teachers stress the value of language and communication skills for study and for post-study employability within and outside of Australia.

**The program includes multiple opportunities for students to develop and reflect upon their language skills**

Language learning permeates all aspects of the students' learning experiences.

- Students encounter prompts on the importance of English language skills in, for example, course learning outcomes and as part of any post-university planning.
- Students regularly receive feedback and reflect on their language skills development which is included as part of assessment.

# 2

## Principle 2: Respect and adjust for diversity

It can be especially difficult to decide how to manage the language needs of large groups of students. In any group of English as an additional language (EAL) speakers, there will probably be students for whom English is the only additional language they speak and who regard themselves as capable and competent users. Others in the cohort will have studied in English for many years but not used English to read, write or to discuss abstract or complex ideas. Some will have studied English to pass entry tests and examinations but never have learned in English. Within these and other groups, individual students skills sets will also vary. Some will be more able to read than speak (and vice versa) and many will lose confidence when stressed, tired or placed in unfamiliar situations. Program leaders and teachers must decide which language learning needs can and cannot be accommodated within the program and what requires referral to language specialists. Adjustments to teaching will need to change over the duration of the program as students move closer to graduation.

## What to look for

**Programs include activities to identify an individual student's language needs**

**Programs are organised to facilitate early intervention for English language gaps or problems**

Activities are scheduled to avoid repetition; scheduling takes account of students enrolling late at the start of a program.

Diagnostic activities are not overly demanding on students' time and are embedded in discipline-specific tasks.

Feedback on language use is given in time for it to make a difference; it is specific to the individual and states what the student needs to do for future improvement and success.

Students are referred to language support specialists when they need more support than can be offered within the program or by an individual teacher.

A needs analysis tool is used to help students identify areas of strength and weakness and take responsibility for improving their English language skills. (CG7-453 provides a range of survey instruments focussing on different aspects of English language competence). This can also encourage students to reflect on their progress and set appropriate goals, perhaps with the assistance of learning support services staff.

*Use reflection based writing as a tool to develop students' writing skills (PPS-43, p. 88).\**

## What to look for

**Across a program, there is clarity and consensus in setting assessment standards for English language competence**

*Provide a supportive environment for students by ensuring their contributions in class are valued – even if you disagree or don't completely understand what they say, thank them for having a go\* (CG7-453, p. 25).\**

*Teachers provide support material like glossaries, definitions of key terms and annotated readings as pre-reading and support for lectures (CG7-489, p. 6).\**

**Reading and writing tasks are designed to be sensitive to students' varied English language skills**

Examination and coursework design takes into account best practice in writing clear, accessible briefs. Where assessors are unsure of best practice, they consult language specialists.

Assessment briefs include statements on language requirements (for example: on grammar, clarity of expression, use of appropriate terminology, consistency of 'voice' etc.).

Markers discuss the difficulty of distinguishing between language capacity and an ability to communicate ideas and construct arguments. They share ideas on how to be less distracted by sentence level features such as spelling and grammar and instead, how to focus on paragraph level issues and on the overall organisation of the text.

Markers are aware of the many ways in which a text might be organised, only some of which will be in line with expected and valued organisational structures in the discipline. For example, a student may be used to using an inductive style of argument when the preferred format is deductive. Or the student may imply a view, perhaps by using a question or a proverb, rather than stating it directly. Both are acceptable approaches in many learning settings but may be inappropriate in their Australian studies.

Consensus on assessment standards increases when, across the program, markers agree when and where it is appropriate to look for underlying ideas and to accept unfamiliar organisational formats. Markers should also agree on when, on the other hand, they should reduce marks because students have used language and structure which is not valued in the discipline. [See A Quick Guide on Assessment](#) for further discussion of consensus on marking standards.

Markers hold expectations for accurate English grammar which are appropriate to the level of work and the values of the discipline. Requirements are likely to vary between disciplines.

Writing and reading tasks are reviewed for accessibility, either by teachers themselves or with the help of language specialists.

Teachers recognise the critical role of reading in helping students to develop their vocabulary, to learn discipline-specific discourse styles and to master academic writing.

Reading tasks are more accessible if teachers:

- monitor students' experiences with set texts. Where a text proves to be consistently inaccessible, a language specialist can help to analyse whether difficulties are due to the way the text is written or the complexity of content. If the former, it may be possible to identify equivalent and more accessible texts
- state which sections of reading assignments or lists are especially important for meeting learning outcomes or for completing a particular task. Inexperienced readers often appreciate being told the purpose for reading a text, how to achieve this purpose and what will be done with any insights gained
- take account of the speed at which some students will be able to read, especially in early months. If the amount of reading cannot be adjusted, then teachers can alert students who read slowly to the need to plan for sufficient reading time.

Writing tasks are more accessible if teachers:

- make requirements clear. Clear task descriptions state what the student must do and what will be assessed, including the relative importance of language
- assign word counts that are appropriate for the task rather than falling back on standard length requirements
- consider the number of sources required. Asking for fewer sources but used in more depth might achieve a similar learning result with more equitable levels of effort from students who are struggling with English and those who are fluent readers. Fewer sources can also help those mastering referencing and citation practices as some students will be unfamiliar with the idea of using ideas from texts rather than aiming for full text mastery
- state if proofreading and grammar checking services can be used.

As students progress through the program, writing tasks should become more complex and at all stages, complexity should be adjusted for level of study.

Where appropriate, teachers refer students to language specialists and writing skills specialists for generic guidance.

# 3

## Principle 3: Provide context-specific information and support

Unless students have underpinning concepts and associations for the information they are being given, they will struggle to understand and remember it even if they know the dictionary definition of terms used. Tacit and implicit knowledge develops slowly and as it does, students' growing language competence will shape students' developing identity and language use. Teachers have a crucial role in giving information in ways that enhance the chance of it 'sticking', especially where information is crucial for success.

### What to look for

#### Course and program documentation is explicit on language requirements and standards

Key information is provided in a range of formats: oral, written, online, through discussion, etc. Where written guidance is crucial for future success, discussion opportunities ensure students can check their understanding, know why it matters and where to find help.

Guidance on program procedures and processes is reviewed to see if it is written in as straightforward a way as possible. Where the language of the discipline is used, disciplinary terminology is included with care then explained and discussed as appropriate so that over time, students learn to use it and to understand what it means. Oral information is treated with equal care.

Teachers select text books and resources which offer global perspectives and which use accessible language.

Assignments and requirements state what essay titles mean and explain the tacit and implicit meanings of common verbs such as 'consider', 'contrast' and 'justify'.

#### Feedback to students on language issues is specific, selective and useful

Written feedback concentrates on key language issues rather than copy-editing or noting and/or correcting errors. Markers note instances of especially effective language use.

Feedback suggests how changes should be made and points the student to additional guidance on making future changes in, for example:

- the university's student services unit
- the university's website
- on line, where help that is tailored to disciplinary requirements and is easy to locate with a key word search
- study-skills books for students which are widely available in any university bookstore.

In high value work such as a thesis, tutors might rewrite one paragraph as an example of what is expected and provide a model to guide the students' revision.

#### Referral systems are in place

#### Referral systems are sufficient and are staffed by flexible language support specialists

#### Teachers and students use referral services regularly

Teachers and language specialists work together ([See A Quick Guide to Working with Student Learning Services](#)).

The best model of collaboration is 'best fit' for the characteristics of the student cohort and the content teachers' requirements. A range of collaboration models exist: from paired teaching at one extreme, to specialists running tailored sessions in several courses across a program, to the more detached approach introducing specialists then expecting students to access support as and when needs arrive.

# 4

## Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement

Culture and language issues are intrinsically connected. In interactive communication, for example, participants use verbal and nonverbal signals which are culturally specific and they must understand and work effectively with others who might be using different styles and unfamiliar ways of communicating. They will also need to learn to use the language of the discipline and to use valued and preferred styles of presentation and discussion in their discipline.

Teachers need to teach all students how to communicate effectively with others from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

## 4

## What to look for

**Students have opportunities to use oral English**

Interaction is a regular feature of seminars, practicals, fieldwork, etc. Social interaction precedes assigned tasks and students are expected to carry the insights gained in 'getting to know' activities into interactive course work.

Tutors and research supervisors devote time to supporting students' growing sense of themselves as articulate members of the discipline. Asking open questions and listening to the replies is often a key way to show students they are developing their oral skills.

Overt links are made between course-based activities, students' developing oral skills within the program and the importance of oral skills in their post-study lives.

*The teacher uses 'real world' problems with interaction embedded in the curricula to provide opportunities for students to draw on their own knowledge and experience (CG8-725).\**

**All students learn to communicate with others who have variable English language skills**

Discussion between students crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries. Problems in communication are seen as shared rather than the sole responsibility of those for whom English is an additional language.

All students are supported in developing their own communication skills, including increasing:

- tolerance for different accents
- tactics to check for understanding (their own and others')
- self-awareness of what makes them easy or hard to understand by diverse audiences in different situations.

Students are, as far as possible, protected from negative or frustrating experiences when trying to communicate with their diverse peers. This is because such experiences can have long lasting negative effects on all students' willingness to engage and can damage their sense of self-efficacy (See [A Quick Guide to Managing Group Work](#)).

## 5

## Principle 5: Be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence

Teachers' reactions to combining the role of language developer and content teacher vary. Some are surprised but accept it as part of the role in universities where language diversity is the norm. Many are unsure how to proceed and more than a few resent the additional demand. Whatever their reaction, teacher support for students' developing language skills will require time and effort. Those who wish to be more effective in the role will need to regularly seek and review feedback from students and check on evidence of student success. This makes it likely that interventions and adjustments will have the most impact with the least possible demand on teachers.

## What to look for

**Student surveys seek feedback on language development in content teaching and from other service providers**

Students have opportunities to comment on what was and was not helpful in their efforts to become better English speakers, readers and writers. They are also invited to say what additional support they might find useful.

Feedback is gathered at both program and course-level. Analysis of feedback looks at the program as a whole as well as individual courses.

**Teachers seek guidance and support from language professionals**

Program leaders ensure that planning and evaluation events include language learning support staff where appropriate.

Annual performance reviews address issues of language teaching skills and where appropriate, refer teachers for additional information and guidance.

Contact and access information for language support staff are widely disseminated.

# 5

## What to look for

### Teachers monitor their own English use

Teachers use feedback from colleagues and students to reflect on how understandable they are. They do not just use their own assumptions but listen to others' comments to questions such as:

Do I speak too quickly? Is my pronunciation clear?

Do I use too many metaphors, colloquial expressions or idioms?

When lecturing, do I pause sufficiently after significant ideas to give students time to think?

Do I signal clearly when I am changing topic or moving to a new section in lectures?

Do I invite students to tell me if they don't understand me?

Teachers guard against stereotyping or making assumptions about student groups by nationality and recognise the changing educational contexts from which their students come.

There are opportunities within annual performance reviews and professional development interviews to discuss and evaluate the issue of developing students' English language skills.

# 6

## Principle 6: Prepare students for life in a globalised world

English is a global language in worldwide use. Whatever students decide to do after graduation, it will involve communicating in English with others with a wide range of abilities to use English and levels of confidence and competence in the language. Students are likely to use English in employment, as global citizens and in their on-going professional development. How can teachers help students to achieve the language skills needed in a globalised world?

## What to look for

### Help all students see the importance of English language capability for their post-university life

Support for CV writing and job seeking assistance emphasises the language expectations of different international workplace environments.

Teachers are aware of and emphasise the linguistic diversity of the academy, the workplace and society.

Domestic students understand the importance and transferability of the language skills they gain at university. Students are able to describe their skills in interacting and communicating with those for whom English is an additional language.

Internships and/or work experience are available in global companies or local companies with international connections and students reflect on the variety of language skills needed in those workplaces. Insightful reflections are shared with other students.

### Programs have clear links with careers professionals

International students are realistic about what employers in their home countries are likely to expect in terms of returning graduates' English. They are aware of the rising expectations amongst employers for language competence.

All students, especially monolingual Anglophones, are encouraged/required to reflect on the language demands of work placements and internships; to identify areas in which they need to develop their skills and to name strategies they will use to do this.

## Related OLT Projects

CG8-766, *Investigating the efficacy of culturally specific academic literacy and academic honesty resources for Chinese students*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-efficacy-culturally-specific-academic-literacy-vu-2010>.

CG8-725, *Finding common ground: enhancing interaction between domestic and international students*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-enhancing-domestic-international-melbourne-2008>.

CG7-489, *Evaluation of teaching and learning delivery modes in arts*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-evaluation-teaching-learning-monash-2007>.

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**Good Practice Principles in Practice:  
Teaching Across Cultures**

**A Quick Guide to  
Managing Group Work**

## A Quick Guide to Managing Group Work

### Introduction

This guide is intended for teachers who use group work to assess their students' learning and for course and program designers who include this activity in their plans.

Cultural diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception in Australian universities. Culture is not only defined by nationality or ethnicity. The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people. Cultures are most often recognised by shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and affective understandings. These are learned through a process of socialization. However, within different cultural groups, individuals are unique. Meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication within and across cultural groups. Cultural learning is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process for students and teachers. Cultural diversity in the student population has a significant impact on teaching and learning.

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### The Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures

This guide is organised around six principles of good practice for teaching across cultures. This guide interprets good practice principles as they apply to managing group work.

- Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will **focus on students as learners**
- Principle 2: Good teaching across cultures will **respect and adjust for diversity**
- Principle 3: Good teaching across cultures will **provide context-specific information and support**
- Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will **enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement**
- Principle 5: Good teaching across cultures will be **adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence**
- Principle 6: Good teaching across cultures will **prepare students for life in a globalised world**

You can find a detailed description of each Principle at [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

The focus here is on catering for cultural and linguistic diversity in university classrooms. This guide may be used to evaluate current activities, identify areas for improvement and find examples of best practice.

## Principle 1: Focus on students as learners

Group work is a prominent feature of many courses and programs in Australian universities. All students will need to develop their skills to work interculturally in academic, professional and social groups. There is much in the literature pointing to the need to appropriately prepare and support students as learners in culturally diverse groups. There are many ways that teachers can assist all students to learn to work effectively in culturally diverse groups.

### What to look for

#### The program as a whole has been planned to support students' skills development

It is not assumed that students will commence the program with the ability to work effectively in culturally diverse groups.

Across the program, there are structured opportunities for teaching, practise and feedback on students' use of intercultural skills in groups.

Teachers discuss the importance of being able to work in culturally diverse groups with students and some of the challenges and opportunities this provides in different learning and professional contexts.

Students have adequate opportunities to demonstrate their learning individually as well as in groups. One way to do this is to use fewer, longer and better-designed group work assignments across a program.

Graduate attributes or program outcomes specify discipline and program specific intercultural and collaborative skills that are developed in groups.

#### Intercultural group work skills are taught and assessed

*"When students' projects (which are assessed) depend on the knowledge and insights their peers can provide, they quickly start to see the benefits of peer learning and they start to see each other in a different light"* (Academic, CG8-725, p. 11).\*

#### Group work skills are assessed as a learning outcome

Teachers seek expert guidance on teaching of the intercultural skills needed to work collaboratively in diverse groups.

There is time for safe practice in working collaboratively before students are assessed on a group task or product.

Students are supported and encouraged in the processes of peer learning.

Overall responsibility for teaching group work skills is managed at the program level. Individual course teachers check and reinforce skills teaching. Effective group work skills include communication in English with others who are still developing their capability. Students learn to check that they are understood. Where staff are unsure how to teach this, they seek guidance from language professionals. The ability of individual students to work in culturally diverse groups is assessed only after students have been instructed in how to work effectively in such groups.

#### Teachers require students to reflect on their intercultural learning as part of the group task

When teachers are calculating how much time they can expect students to need for completing the group task, they factor in time for reflection too. Students are given a structured way to make sense of their experiences. Focus is on awareness of current strengths and gaps for future learning. This can be done through reflective journaling or focus group discussion.

Assessment of group work includes peer assessment as well as self-assessment and reflection.

*"When students are asked to think about what they are learning in the group process, they start to look at the world from a non-self perspective. They start to be more open-minded and they learn intercultural interaction skills and interact with students from different backgrounds that way"* (Academic, CG8-725, p. 18).\*

#### When designing group tasks, teachers attend to the workload on students

The task brief takes account of the assumed demands (time, travel, research, organising shared work, etc.) for completing the task.

Contemporaneous demands on students are considered when setting a group task. Teachers protect students' other commitments from being threatened by an over-demanding group task.

\* Quote from ALTC/OLT project. Please refer to back page of this guide for project details.

# 2

## Principle 2: Respecting and adjusting for diversity

Group work can be a rich site for intercultural learning and for discovering diverse ways to address issues and solve problems. The risk is that dominant paradigms and dominant voices are the only ones heard, leaving others feeling marginalised and disregarded. Teachers and task designers can play a critical role in encouraging students to use and value each others' skills and knowledge. This means they may have to adjust their teaching approach and encourage students to adjust their behaviours when working in culturally diverse groups.

### What to look for

#### Assessed tasks are truly collaborative

Task design does not encourage students to divide up the task, allocate subunits to be completed independently then recombine for submission. To require collaboration, the task might be to:

- 'collect and compare'
- 'catalogue and evaluate'
- 'analyse in terms of each member's context then create a theoretical framework for ...'
- 'document the process used in problem solving then rank the effectiveness of ...'.

Some teachers design tasks with a 'jigsaw' approach, meaning each student is provided with only part of the information to complete a task. This 'gap' requires the student to work with others to complete the task. In this way, successful task completion evidences successful group work. Students can be set a task which is too difficult for any one member to complete alone, along with a rationale for the task being constructed in this way. Assessment criteria need to make the seemingly 'impossible' feel safer. Assessors might judge the group's progress or their approach; a mark could reflect an individual's learning gain rather than a judgment of the 'perfect' product.

Students can nominate or be assigned roles and responsibilities, then be required to record and reflect on each individuals' role achievement. Where this includes peer evaluation, students must be trained and supported to do so in ways that are sensitive to cultural diversity.

#### Tasks use and value students' cultural, social and personal knowledge

*"Harness the potential of shared knowledge" (CG8-725).\**

Tasks are designed to value how the students complete the task, as well as the end product.

Tasks require students to use past experiences or share ideas on how things can be done. This allows scope for a range of approaches rather than assuming those from the numerically or linguistically dominant students will prevail.

Assigned roles can be allocated so as to play to strengths or, alternatively, to develop less favoured areas. Knowing students well enough to assign roles assumes prior efforts to audit and reflect on a students' skill sets.

#### Teachers take care when establishing group membership

*"I felt trepidation about being interventionist, about mixing up the groups but I found if you don't do it at the start in a structured sort of way, it's not going to happen" (Academic, CG8-725, p. 13).\**

Students select their own groups where tasks are short-lived and/or where only the product or result of the work is being assessed. Since students tend to select those they feel comfortable working with, student selected groups are more likely to just focus on outcome. Student selection may be preferable where the cohort does not know each other well. It is inappropriate to allow students to select their own groups if encouraging broader interaction is one of the reasons for using groups.

For teacher selected groups, membership criteria are stated.

When teachers are designing group work, they include mechanisms for students to react to and perhaps challenge membership decisions. Requests at the onset of group work are treated carefully and are not normally agreed to if there is a pedagogical reason for allocating membership. Later, requests are managed in ways that are specified in the task brief.

Teachers are aware of potential clashes between students. Their ideas on cultural 'clashes' are current and regularly interrogated for potential stereotyping or over-generalisations. Teachers avoid combinations of students which might make collaboration too demanding or even impossible for some students.

#### Teachers offer choice and negotiation in group work where possible

Where there is no negotiation, teachers explain why this must be so.

## 2

### What to look for

#### Teachers consider language issues

Teachers seek guidance from professionals/specialists on language issues. Guidance could include strategies for using tasks to enhance students' language development and/or ways of mitigating potential difficulties (See [Quick Guide to Developing English Language Skills](#)).

Tasks are modified as appropriate to down-play the impact of language on assessed outcomes. For example, teachers might ask for a recorded presentation rather than a 'live' one. The recording could then be followed up by a face-to-face question and answer session to check if the group has met the learning outcome. In this example, students who doubted their language skills and/or felt compromised by a public error could rehearse and correct, yet all students must demonstrate they have learned and understood the task. In another example, the group report could be done as a mind map rather than a full text. If so, then students' ideas and how their ideas inter-relate are prominent and language fluency takes a back seat on this occasion.

Assessment criteria make clear the relative importance of language and content then, importantly, markers apply the stated balance. Where balance is not explicit, students often assume a much larger significance for language in their overall grade (See [A Quick Guide to Assessment](#)).

## 3

### Principle 3: Provide context specific information and support

#### What to look for

#### Task requirements are clearly communicated to and understood by students

The group work assignment states what students must do, plus any requirements as to how they do it and over what time frame. This enables planning for those who typically require longer to complete a task.

Task briefs include what is and is not acceptable in relation to help and support. Examples might include proofreading and additional tutoring.

Teachers check regularly with students and peers as to whether their perception of the clarity of materials matches others' views. Materials are accessible to speakers of English as an additional language.

#### Assessment criteria are clear

*The way in which assessment is designed and written and the way lecturers convey their expectations about how the assessment will be undertaken is crucial to how students from various countries, including Australia, perform in that assessment' (PPS-43, p. 6).\**

Assessment criteria balance the importance of how students do the work (the process) with what the group produces (the product). Consideration is given to the fact that diverse groups often take time to negotiate group processes before they can start to work effectively together. This is taken into account by those managing group work.

Students have a chance to discuss and explore what the assessment criteria mean, including checking differences with their previous experiences of assessment.

Assessment criteria take account of the challenges, potential synergies and benefits of working in diverse groups. By using criteria sensitively, teachers can guide students towards regarding intercultural communication as integral to what is being valued rather than a threat to achieving a quality outcome.

#### Students are clear on how to seek help and/or teacher intervention, should they need it

Before students start group work, teachers discuss common blocks to effective group functioning. These include failing to get to know others, too little time spent agreeing on the process, jumping to conclusions about what someone else means if the other person communicates in an unfamiliar or unexpected way and so on.

Teachers monitor group activity through, for example, requiring minutes of meetings, an on-line log or interim reporting, by intermittently observing the group in action or by asking groups to showcase work in progress. Teachers could provide a suggested meeting schedule or an indication of the number of meetings required/expected. Teachers state when, how and in what circumstances students can seek support and once problems have been identified, what action or intervention might occur.

## 4

## Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement

### What to look for

The program creates a climate of interaction from Day One

When programs market their courses, they state that interactive intercultural learning is expected and valued.

Students encounter and interact with each other regularly, on and off campus, throughout the program and in many classrooms. Program documents make clear that students are expected to enter into dialogue with those they perceive as different from themselves as a resource for learning.

Teachers support and choreograph interactions between students, both in and out of classrooms

Previous interaction organised at the program level (see under Principle 1 above) means that students can start group tasks with some knowledge of each other's past experiences, strengths and approaches to learning.

In class and online teachers guide students on how and when to interact and tell them the rationale for doing so.

*"We had to work within the same group for the whole semester, so we start (sic) to feel more comfortable and then we work really well together and become like friends"*  
(Student, CG8-725, p. 11).\*

Where a group task is required, the teacher has ensured prior social interaction

'Ice breaking' activities are incorporated into face-to-face and online teaching early in each teaching period.

'Getting-to-know' each other is encouraged to continue once groups form. The group size supports and encourages interaction. Ideally the group should be between 4 and 6 members.

Activities are designed to raise awareness of fellow students' skills and experiences.

Student-student interaction is a specific aim of group work

Group work is not used as a strategy to manage large class numbers and/or to reduce marking time and cost.

Group work tasks last many weeks and ideally, up to several months. This allows time for students to use, review and develop their intercultural skills as well as time to ensure they can create a high quality product.

*"When groups are formed at course commencement and continued through the course, interaction becomes a core component of the curriculum"* (Academic, CG8-725, p. 11).\*

Teachers support interaction using a range of media

The range could include: face to face, on-line, learning management systems and social media.

# 5

## Principle 5: Be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence

### What to look for

#### Teachers seek students' reactions and feedback

*"We are actually pretty interesting as long as we have opportunity to show you western people"*  
 (Student, CG7-453, p. 30).\*

Feedback on teaching is collected from different groups' and individuals' points of view. Data can come from teachers, students, from academic language and learning specialists and even from external observers such as peers, quality assurance officers or external examiners.

Feedback is appropriately analysed and attended to by teaching staff and their managers. Key issues are identified and acted upon. Students are informed of the actions that have been taken.

Changes are evidence based and care is taken to avoid over reaction to isolated negative comments. Approaches which repeatedly cause issues are modified.

Group work is reviewed across the program, looking for patterns in terms of workloads, frequency, and the type of tasks required.

#### Teachers develop theoretical frameworks to explain and justify their decisions on managing and assessing culturally diverse groups' work

Teachers and course designers are familiar with the literature on managing learning in culturally diverse groups.

#### Staff development needs are identified and met

Teaching staff are regularly consulted on their professional development needs in relation to managing culturally diverse groups.

Good practice in managing intercultural group work is included in the induction of new staff.

Opportunities are provided for ongoing professional development for staff in responding to feedback from students on intercultural group work.

# 6

## Principle 6: preparing students for life in a globalised world

### What to look for

#### Students are assisted to deal with negative interactions and experiences in intercultural groups

Negative experiences can reinforce rather than challenge stereotypes and assumptions about fellow students who are perceived as 'other'.

Opportunities for reflection and discussion of negative as well as positive experiences are included in group work assessment items across the program.

#### Reflection on the significance of learning in diverse groups and of intercultural work is built into tasks

Students are prompted to make explicit links between their experiences in culturally and linguistically diverse study groups and their likely post university life. These could be recorded in a personal log and/or other summative reflective process.

#### Making reflection on experiences over the program a part of the program design

Teachers guide students on how to use intercultural group work as evidence of intercultural skills in CVs, personal development plans and job applications.

## Related OLT Projects

CG8-725, *Finding common ground: enhancing interaction between domestic and international students*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-enhancing-domestic-international-melbourne-2008>>.

CG7-453, *Addressing the ongoing English language growth of international students*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-addressing-ongoing-english-monash-2007>>.

PPS-43, *Assessing students unfamiliar with assessment practices in Australian universities*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-assessing-students-unfamiliar-rmit-2005>>.

## Key References

Cruickshank, K, Chen, H & Warren, S 2012, 'Increasing international and domestic student interaction through group work: a case study from the humanities', *Higher Education Research & Development*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 797-810. DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2012.669748

De Vita, G 2005, 'Fostering intercultural learning through multicultural group work', in JAR Carroll (ed), *Teaching international students: enhancing learning for all students*, Routledge, London, pp. 75-83.

Edmead, C 2013, 'Increasing international and domestic student interaction through group work: a case study from the humanities' in J Ryan (ed), *Cross-cultural teaching and learning for home and international students: internationalisation of pedagogy and curriculum in higher education*, Routledge, Oxon, UK, pp. x-y.

Hibbins, R & Barker, M 2011, 'Group work with students of diverse backgrounds', in J Fowler, A Gudmundsson & J Whicker (eds), *Groups work: a guide for working in groups*, 2nd ed, Palmer Higgs Books Online, pp. 63-68.

Volet SE & Ang G 2012, 'Culturally mixed groups on international campuses: an opportunity for intercultural learning', *Higher Education Research & Development*, vol. 31, no.1, pp. 21-37. DOI:10.1080/07294360.2012.642838

Woods, P, Barker, M, & Hibbins, R 2011, 'Tapping the benefits of multicultural group-work: an exploratory study of postgraduate management students', *International Journal of Management Education*, vol. 9, pp. 59-70. DOI: 10.3794/ijme.92.317

**Good Practice Principles in Practice:  
Teaching Across Cultures**

**A Quick Guide to  
Effective Professional  
Development of Teachers**

# A Quick Guide to Effective Professional Development of Teachers

## Introduction

This guide is intended for teaching staff and for those who support the learning of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Cultural diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception in Australian universities. Culture is not only defined by nationality or ethnicity. The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people. Cultures are most often recognised by shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and affective understandings. These are learned through a process of socialization. However, within different cultural groups, individuals are unique. Meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication within and across cultural groups. Cultural learning is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process for students and teachers. Cultural diversity in the student population has a significant impact on teaching and learning.

This guide draws on current literature on learning and teaching across cultures, on findings from relevant projects funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council from 2006-2012. You can find full summaries of these projects in the Good Practice Report Learning and Teaching Across Cultures available at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-good-practice-report-learning-and-teaching-across-cultures-2011>.

This guide is one of a suite of Quick Guides on topics relevant to learning and teaching across cultures. Other guides are available from [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

## The Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures

This guide is organised around six principles of good practice for teaching across cultures. Each guide interprets the principles in practice.

- Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will **focus on students as learners**
- Principle 2: Good teaching across cultures will **respect and adjust for diversity**
- Principle 3: Good teaching across cultures will **provide context-specific information and support**
- Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will **enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement**
- Principle 5: Good teaching across cultures will be **adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence**
- Principle 6: Good teaching across cultures will **prepare students for life in a globalised world**

You can find a detailed description of each Principle at [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

This guide shows the principles in practice for professional development of staff who teach in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. This guide may be used to check and affirm current practice and/or to identify areas for additional effort or activity.

## Principles into practice: professional development

### Principle 1: Focus on students as learners

Effective teachers consistently treat all students as learners. What might you look for as indicators that teachers are able to and actually do treat all students as learners?

What to look for

**Program and course designers and teachers realise that approaches to knowledge and learning differ across cultures**

**Staff take some responsibility for the development of all students as learners**

Program design supports the development of students as learners with shared responsibility for the development of their English language skills.

Programs are created which:

- develop students' learning skills. For example, programs scaffold academic writing across the first year, teaching it in several courses and returning to the skills when students later tackle their dissertation
- build students' self-awareness as learners. Perhaps several courses require reflective tasks or include discussion of assessment literacy
- track and map learning goals as students move towards graduate-level competence (graduate attributes).

Expert learning and language support staff work with teachers to integrate language development into learning and assessment tasks. Experts help teachers:

- unpack discipline-specific discourses and assessment practices
- develop their skills in presenting course material in various modes. Teachers learn to work on line, at a distance and transnationally before they become responsible for delivery.

Assessment and feedback supports the development of students as learners. For example:

- feedback is accessible and supports learning. Early in the program, assessment criteria related to language use and intercultural competence are explained to students and the reason they are included is discussed
- teachers provide clear statements to students of what is necessary for future improvement as part of feedback on learning activities and assessment tasks
- feedback highlights strengths as well as mistakes and gaps. This is done with care, selecting key points and providing a rationale.

**Programs and courses focus on assessment**

**Teachers ensure students understand what will be assessed and how**

Programs are regularly reviewed to ensure assessment tasks and practices are fair and inclusive. Examples of inclusive practices include:

- offering choices where possible
- making efforts to cater for different learning preferences. Many will date from students' previous learning experiences
- designing courses with a range of assessment modes. For unfamiliar modes, students are provided with exemplars and practice in first year and beyond.

**Programs and courses focus on language learning**

Teachers are trained and supported to enhance and develop their students' language capabilities in line with the requirements of the program/discipline. ([See Quick Guide to Developing English Language Skills](#)).

Care is taken, especially in the early stages of programs, to lower the language demands on students. This can be done in lectures, for example, by providing glossaries, recordings and by mandating pre-lecture reading for content and vocabulary. Teachers can deliberately slow their pace or check students' understanding of key points.

Teachers create safe and structured ways to help students to contribute in class. Methods might include: paired and small group discussion, modelling active listening and preventing native speakers from dominating.

## 2

### Principle 2: Respecting and adjusting for diversity

Effective teachers respect and make adjustments for diversity arising from students' cultural backgrounds or previous educational experiences. As a manager, what might you look for as indicators that teachers and others are being provided with professional development that will help them to make such adjustments?

What to look for

The department is collegial

There is an environment conducive to on-going peer sharing of knowledge and review of practice

Departmental and program leaders provide places and time for staff to meet and discuss issues, designating ways to harvest and share outcomes.

*Curriculum planning, designing and reviewing is done in a discipline-specific approach across a range of units by a team, rather than individually (CG6-37).\**

Teachers are inducted into teaching in off-shore programs

Induction to transnational teaching is for both partners: those from the accrediting university and those in partner institutions

Teachers are provided with location-specific information: How things work here.

There is generic guidance on the design, delivery and evaluation of offshore programs.

Transnational program managers create communication strategies which encourage frequent, comfortable exchanges and discussion between colleagues in partner institutions offshore and those based at the accrediting university.

*Provide opportunities which support "effective and maturing cross-institutional relationships, shared understanding, collegial discussion and negotiation of assessment, institutional support and professional development" (PP8-906, p. 23).\**

There are on-going, organised programs for professional development

Professional development programs are scheduled to facilitate attendance by staff with competing demands on their time. Repeats are regular.

Casual staff are paid to attend professional development. Their participation in professional development activities is encouraged and recorded.

There are minimum requirements for attendance at professional development activities which focus on teaching across cultures.

Professional development offerings are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with any changes or new issues linked to culturally diverse students' learning needs.

In offshore programs, locally-employed staff have access to and attend professional development events.

## 3

### Principle 3: Providing context-specific information and support

Effective teachers are able to provide context-specific information and support to culturally diverse students in different modes of delivery, including onshore, offshore and online teaching. What might indicate that teachers and others are being offered professional development that will enable them to provide this type of context-specific information and support?

What to look for

There is a range of mechanisms for alerting teachers to information relevant to their students

Information on services for students is straight forward and easy to access.

Information on legal responsibilities is tailored to fit different national and international contexts

Teachers can check on their legal responsibilities, (e.g. Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act and Anti-Discrimination legislation in particular). Any link between onshore and offshore legal contexts is made explicit.

\* Quote from ALTC/OLT project. Please refer to back page of this guide for project details.

### 3

#### What to look for

All teachers are provided with program and course specific information of relevance to culturally diverse students

Program information states all program arrangements, such as those covering course duration, assessment timetables, holiday entitlement, the use of dictionaries in examinations and mechanisms for adjustments for religious obligations.

Administrative and accreditation arrangements are clear and explicit, including those concerning admission, continued registration, progression and completion.

Students develop their own formal and informal support networks

Opportunities are provided for international students to learn about local cultures through, for example, informal interactions with Australian 'host' families, visits to rural areas/cities, interaction with local community and sporting groups, participation in volunteering.

Community groups are encouraged to interact with international students.

Diversity within the Australian student body is recognised and celebrated. Australian students are encouraged to assist international students to settle into the university and into the life of the community.

Information is provided which is specific to offshore teaching

Teachers' responsibilities are clear in relation to:

- participating in briefing and debriefing sessions, pre and post teaching assignments
- identifying and meeting professional development expectations or gaps. Professional development concentrates on contextualisation of teaching, assessment of language use and development, evaluation of materials and providing pastoral support in the offshore context
- clarifying the extent to which teachers will need to support students' language development.

Program managers ensure legal and contractual obligations in the Australian and local jurisdiction are stated and understood.

Program leaders and managers recognise that some procedures can be especially opaque for staff and students from culturally diverse backgrounds

Teachers are encouraged to reach out to all students (indigenous, international, refugee, migrant, offshore, rural and isolated) and keep them informed about their rights and entitlements as students.

In documents which students use frequently, such as course guides, there are simple explanations of processes and practices.

### 4

#### Principle 4: Enabling/facilitating meaningful intercultural interaction, dialogue and engagement

Effective teachers can enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and interaction amongst their students. As a manager of others' professional development, what might you look for as indicators that staff can facilitate intercultural interaction and dialogue?

#### What to look for

Curriculum design incorporates activities for staff-student and student-student interaction

Teachers make use of specific guidance on curriculum design. See, for example, the detailed guidance in the [Quick Guide to Curriculum Design](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac) at [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

Interaction continues in course delivery and assessment

Faculty based social gatherings are organised which students perceive as relevant. Staff attend these gatherings and encourage student attendance. Events are used to build networks.

# 4

## What to look for

There are events and provision designed to develop intercultural awareness

Events and training are aimed at staff and all students. In general, attendance is mandated and providers monitor participation.

All students are encouraged to develop their awareness and skills in their use of intercultural communication strategies.

Organisers review programs regularly to identify activities where dialogue and intercultural interaction are required. The requirement for interaction is explicit within programs; activities are linked to appropriate graduate attributes.

Leaders and managers recognise the staff development needs of teachers who are expected to encourage and support student interaction

*Lecturers should be very keen to employ appropriate technologies, e.g.: eLuminator, Blackboard, online demons, web20 applications and sites, short videos and movies, animated cartoons, intelligent software\* (CG7-494, p. 131).\**

There is provision for common issues to be addressed. Teachers' needs might include:

- how to evaluate and adapt resources and teaching materials
- how to check that activities give opportunities for students to draw upon their culture or previous experience
- how to assist language development of their students (See [A Quick Guide to Developing English Language Skills](#)).

Teachers are provided with specific opportunities to develop their ability to fully utilise IT and multi-media as teaching tools.

*"Online tools such as discussion boards, wikis or blogs can be used to create an online community of learners" (CG8-725, p. 131).\**

# 5

## Principle 5: Being adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence

Effective teachers remain adaptable, flexible and responsive to their students and to the teaching context. What would show that teachers are able and willing to be adaptable, flexible and responsive?

### What to look for

The program team collects and uses feedback

Managers and program leaders ensure feedback is collected in a variety of ways.

Feedback is processed, analysed and reported to relevant people and committees.

Feedback is acted on as need arises.

Where feedback has shaped and has impacted on programs, this is made clear to teaching staff and to students.

Staff engagement and satisfaction is monitored and supported

Data is gathered on teachers' personal needs and issues. Someone makes sense of findings and acts upon any that are significant.

There are rewards and recognition for responsive teaching.

Workload levels and levels of stress in staff teaching across cultures are closely monitored and adjustments are made to class size and workload where necessary.

# 6

## Principle 6: Preparing students for life in a globalised world

Effective teachers prepare students for life in a globalised world. Managers can look for indicators and evidence that staff are able and willing to do so.

## What to look for

There are mechanisms for teachers to increase and update their knowledge of global issues within their discipline

Global issues are incorporated into student assessment.

Students are regularly gaining employment positions overseas.

Students are networking internationally and interculturally on campus and/or online.

Students take part in exchange programs with partner institutions.

Teachers can experience and learn from living and working in intercultural and globally interconnected settings

Teachers are supported in learning about the global issues of their discipline through for example: travelling to attend conferences, industry internships, discussing issues with staff in offshore partner institutions; they disseminate information to colleagues and incorporate it into their teaching.

Cultural and linguistic diversity is the norm in program teams.

Staff from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds teach in the core courses of the program. Care is taken that staff from different backgrounds do not find themselves predominantly teaching in non-compulsory or elective units and/or with no power to influence curriculum decisions.

There are opportunities to regularly discuss and share ideas about global issues and global citizenship with colleagues

Global issues are an explicit part of the discussion of program teams.

Global issues are an explicit part of the discussion of the curriculum.

Internationalisation of the curriculum is incorporated into the processes of program approval and review.

## Related OLT Projects

CG7-378, *Enhancing frameworks for assuring the quality of teaching and learning in offshore education programs*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-enhancing-frameworks-quality-teaching-offshore-uwa-2010>>.

CG6-37, *Embedding the development of intercultural competence in business education*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-embedding-development-business-usyd-2009>>.

PP8-906, *Moderation for fair assessment in transnational learning and teaching*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-moderation-fair-assessment-unisa-2008>>.

CG8-725, *Enhancing domestic and international students engagement: changing attitudes and behaviours*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-enhancing-domestic-international-melbourne-2008>>.

CG7-494, *Strategies and approaches to teaching and learning cross cultures*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-strategies-approaches-teaching-uts-2007>>.

CG7-453, *Addressing the ongoing English language growth of international students*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-addressing-ongoing-english-monash-2007>>.

CG6-38, *Diversity: a longitudinal study of how student diversity relates to resilience and successful progression in a new generation university*, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-diversity-longitudinal-study-how-ecu-2006>>.

## Key References

AVCC 2005, *Provision of education to international students: code of practice and guidelines for Australian universities*, <<http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/resources/337/324>>.

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DOI: 10.1007/s10755-012-9213-4

**Good Practice Principles in Practice:  
Teaching Across Cultures**

**A Quick Guide to Working  
with Student Learning Services**

## Good Practice Principles in Practice

# A Quick Guide to Working with Student Learning Services

### Introduction

This guide is intended for teaching staff and for those who support the learning of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Cultural diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception in Australian universities. Culture is not only defined by nationality or ethnicity. The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people. Cultures are most often recognised by shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and affective understandings. These are learned through a process of socialization. However, within different cultural groups, individuals are unique. Meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication within and across cultural groups. Cultural learning is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process for students and teachers. Cultural diversity in the student population has a significant impact on teaching and learning.

This guide draws on current literature on learning and teaching across cultures, on findings from relevant projects funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council from 2006-2012. You can find full summaries of these projects in the Good Practice Report Learning and Teaching Across Cultures available at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-good-practice-report-learning-and-teaching-across-cultures-2011>.

This guide is one of a suite of Quick Guides on topics relevant to learning and teaching across cultures. Other guides are available from [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

### The Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures

This guide is organised around six principles of good practice for teaching across cultures. Each guide interprets the principles in practice.

- Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will **focus on students as learners**
- Principle 2: Good teaching across cultures will **respect and adjust for diversity**
- Principle 3: Good teaching across cultures will **provide context-specific information and support**
- Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will **enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement**
- Principle 5: Good teaching across cultures will be **adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence**
- Principle 6: Good teaching across cultures will **prepare students for life in a globalised world**

You can find a detailed description of each Principle at [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

In this guide, the focus is on how teachers might work effectively with student services staff to put these good practice principles into practice. This guide may be used to evaluate current activities and identify areas for improvement as well as examples of best practice.

# 1

## Principles into practice: student services

### Principle 1: Focus on students as learners

One of the responsibilities of the university is to ensure a well-managed transition to university life and learning environments for all students. International students, indigenous students, local students from migrant and refugee backgrounds, students from rural and isolated backgrounds and students enrolled in courses taught offshore have distinctive learning needs. Many of the students' needs during transition will be managed within classrooms; some are more appropriately shared with student services staff. Working together, while focussing on students as learners, teachers and support staff can meet diverse students' distinctive needs during all stages of the student life-cycle.

#### What to look for

##### 'At risk' students are identified early

*Recognise and address the intensifiers, "separation from the usual support network, including family and friends, separation from the familiar and the consequent 'fish out of water' feeling or lack of familiarity with, and understanding of academic as well as general way of life" (CG7-507, p. 19).\**

Centrally located support team work closely with academic staff to identify risk indicators.

Student services staff assist teachers to understand and respond to culturally diverse students' learning needs to minimise risk.

Early intervention programs are in place to identify students at academic risk.

Everyone working with students recognises the effort required to find out about students' educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They try and learn students' names where possible and then use them.

##### 'At risk' students are guided and referred to support for academic, language or personal issues

There are mechanisms in place for on-going monitoring of students' well-being and adjustment.

Teachers take appropriate action where necessary to refer students to support services.

##### Teachers and support service staff have ongoing mutually respectful working relationships

Teachers and support services staff work together in devising orientation and ongoing care strategies.

Where appropriate, support services staff are invited to classrooms and make themselves and their expertise known to students.

Teachers ensure all students are introduced to learning support staff early in the semester.

All staff work within requirements for privacy and confidentiality.

# 2

### Principle 2: Respect and adjust for diversity

Support staff and teachers are aware of the how cultural and linguistic diversity may impact on learning in an Australian university and adjust their services to accommodate these issues. Adjustment is guided by knowledge of and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity.

#### What to look for

##### Teaching staff are aware of cultural issues which may cause problems for students as learners

Teachers access information collected by the university about teaching diverse students.

##### Teachers make adjustments to accommodate the learning needs of students.

Teaching and support staff regularly exchange information on available support services and student issues.

Teachers are supported by academic language and learning staff in making adjustments to their teaching and assessment to accommodate student diversity.

\* Quote from ALTC/OLT project. Please refer to back page of this guide for project details.

## 2

### What to look for

**Teachers are aware of specialist support services provided for students**

Students are informed at commencement and regularly reminded as the program progresses by their teachers about support services available to them.  
Mentoring and other peer support programs are available and actively supported by staff.

**Teachers and support services staff work as a team to support student learning**

Referral systems are in place and teachers use them.  
Students are referred to service providers for personal and academic issues beyond the expertise of their teachers.  
Teaching staff demonstrate approval of learning support services to lessen the risk of stigma attached to seeking help. For example, learning support staff and teachers collaborate on the design of workshops for students or learning support services staff provide a segment in a lecture on how to approach a particular assessment task.

**Religious requirements are respected**

The impact on students of major festivals such as Ramadan, Divali and Chinese New Year is recognised and appropriate adjustments made to accommodate religious duties. For example, exams are scheduled sensitively, avoiding holy days where possible and/or alternative arrangements are provided.

## 3

### Principle 3: Provide context-specific information and support

For information to be useful, it needs to be context-specific and to be drafted in ways which are sensitive to culture and language issues, especially but not exclusively, at the start of university study. Unresolved settlement and academic adjustment issues can have a serious negative impact on student learning and some students will approach teachers for assistance before going to learning support staff.

### What to look for

**Teaching and support staff are aware of the special needs of different groups of students**

Information relevant to the circumstances of different groups, such as post-graduates, refugees, indigenous students, international students and disabled students, is routinely provided and regularly updated as the student profile changes.

**Information provided to students is sensitive to differences in their previous social, cultural and educational experiences**

Students know when and how they can ask questions.  
Academic writing skills include tips on decoding questions. What is the assessor looking for?  
Information avoids giving the impression that there is only one way to organise systems or institutions.  
Differences between Australian procedures and requirements and those in other countries are explained where appropriate. Teaching and support staff make the implicit explicit.

**Support and teaching staff encourage students to seek out information as and when they need it**

A variety of people including teachers, learning support staff and well-trained peer mentors are involved in organising and delivering orientation activities.  
Critical orientation information is provided in a variety of ways: face-to-face, in print form, online, and interactively.  
Support extends beyond orientation and key messages are reinforced. Information overload in the first few weeks is avoided. This can be fairly simply done if information relevant at different times of the semester is available on a web-site and students are sent regular emails to remind them it's there, or the site is linked to online teaching materials for easy, just-in-time access.

**Expectations concerning attendance are explicit and consistently communicated**

There are opportunities for students to discuss significant differences between their expectations and those of university staff. Informal get-togethers are a good way for students to interact with support staff and teachers to ask questions.  
Teaching and support staff work together to stress the importance of attendance for scheduled teaching and engagement in learning activities (in class and online). Monitoring of online activity is increasingly being used as a reliable and practical form of tracking student engagement.

# 4

## Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement

Interaction between culturally and linguistically diverse students will not happen automatically. Teachers and learning support staff can work together and individually to enable and facilitate meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement. Collaborative effort will be needed during orientation, in classrooms and on campus. Some students will approach teachers for assistance before going to learning support staff.

### What to look for

<p><b>Structured social activities encourage intercultural friendships and interaction</b></p>	<p>Mentoring and buddy programs include training in intercultural awareness and communication. Interaction between international students, domestic students and families is encouraged and supported.</p>
<p><b>Organised interactive activities are inclusive</b></p> <p><i>* Students particularly value peer support networks* (CG6-38, p. 9).*</i></p>	<p>Domestic and international students are involved in mentoring schemes. Mentors are trained and their role is supported by teachers and support staff. Training emphasises the importance of self reflection and self awareness.</p>
<p><b>Students develop their own formal and informal support networks</b></p>	<p>Opportunities are provided for international students to learn about local cultures through, for example, informal interactions with Australian ‘host’ families, visits to rural areas/cities, interaction with local community and sporting groups and participation in volunteering.</p> <p>Community groups are encouraged to interact with international students.</p> <p>Diversity within the Australian student body is recognised and celebrated. Australian students are encouraged to assist international students to settle into the university and into the life of the community.</p>
<p><b>There are links between learning in class and learning in co-curricular activities</b></p>	<p>Support services are available to assist international students to develop strategies to participate effectively in informal situations in and out of class as well as formal oral presentations.</p> <p>Students are rewarded for non-academic or co-curricular intercultural interactions. Some universities offer certificates or otherwise recognise the benefits of intercultural activities.</p>

# 5

## Principle 5: Be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence

Given the broad range of students’ needs, increasing demands on teaching and service staff and decreasing budgets there is always a need to be flexible in response to evidence. Quality assurance and monitoring of the effectiveness of support services is key in responding to student needs and providing the best possible outcome for students.

### What to look for

<p><b>Knowledge on dealing with cultural and linguistic issues is current</b></p>	<p>Support staff and teachers are aware of current trends in recruitment and in tracking the experiences of diverse students. Staff are given time for professional development to ensure best practice.</p> <p>Web based student support and professional development materials reflect current best practice. Support staff and teaching staff undertake systematic review of the relevant literature on learning support.</p> <p>Specialists from other universities and countries visit regularly and contribute to the professional development of all staff.</p>
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# 5

## What to look for

**Student feedback and performance prompts appropriate adjustments and initiatives**

Students' experiences of learning support are collected.

Information is regularly exchanged between teaching and support staff on issues related to student settlement and performance. Responsibility for student learning support is a shared endeavour. Consultation meetings with students and surveys of their experiences occur regularly. Responses are kept anonymous where possible to encourage openness. Students are kept informed about changes made on the feedback from previous surveys and meetings.

# 6

## Principle 6: Preparing students for life in a globalised world

Teachers can work with learning support providers to develop students' intercultural skills, knowledge and values for life in a globalised and interconnected world. Before graduation, the focus is on making the most of opportunities in the formal and the informal curriculum.

## What to look for

**Multiple perspectives on global issues are welcomed from students, teachers and learning support staff**

Learning support and teaching staff come from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

*When teachers and learning support people use examples, illustrations and case studies they reflect multiple, settings, perspectives and contexts (CG8-766, p. 45).\**

**Intercultural dialogue and awareness is valued by all support service staff and teachers**

Credence and respect is given to variations in English language use.

Australian students are encouraged by teachers and support services staff to talk with international students re life and work in their countries.

International experience and engagement with cultural diversity at home is recognised and rewarded through global leadership/experience awards.

**Students have access to career information and services that are internationally relevant**

Specific career planning sessions are provided for students who wish to work overseas, including international students and Australian students seeking internships or employment overseas. Skype sessions allow overseas employers to contribute and give access to careers expositions for graduates.

Graduates returning to their home countries are provided with advice on transitioning to life and work after study in Australia. Where relevant, international students are give specific advice on seeking employment in Australia.

**Alumni are used actively and creatively**

Chapters are active offshore and are closely connected to the university.

## Related OLT Projects

CG7-378, *Enhancing frameworks for assuring the quality of teaching and learning in offshore education programs*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-enhancing-frameworks-quality-teaching-offshore-uwa-2010>.

CG6-37, *Embedding the development of intercultural competence in business education*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-embedding-development-business-usyd-2009>.

CG8-766, *Investigating the efficacy of culturally specific academic literacy and academic honesty resources for Chinese students*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-investigating-efficacy-vu-2008>.

CG7-453, *Addressing the ongoing English language growth of international students*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-addressing-ongoing-english-monash-2007>.

CG6-38, *Diversity: a longitudinal study of how student diversity relates to resilience and successful progression in a new generation university*, <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-diversity-longitudinal-study-how-ecu-2006>.

## Key References

AVCC 2005, *Provision of education to international students: code of practice and guidelines for Australian universities*, <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/resources/337/324>.

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**Good Practice Principles in Practice:  
Teaching Across Cultures**

**A Quick Guide for Teachers**

## A Quick Guide for Teachers

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Cultural diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception in Australian universities. Culture is not only defined by nationality or ethnicity. The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people. Cultures are most often recognised by shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and affective understandings. These are learned through a process of socialization. However, within different cultural groups, individuals are unique. Meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication within and across cultural groups. Cultural learning is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process for students and teachers. Cultural diversity in the student population has a significant impact on teaching and learning.

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You can find a detailed description of each Principle at [ieaa.org.au/ltac](http://ieaa.org.au/ltac).

In this guide the focus is on teaching effectively in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. It may be used to check and affirm current practice and/or to identify areas for additional effort or action.

# 1

## Principles into practice: teaching

### Principle 1: Focus on students as learners

International and domestic students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds will bring a range of learning behaviours and styles into the classroom, perceive themselves in many different ways as learners and have different expectations of their teachers. Little can be assumed. All students, not just some students, are learners in a new environment. Particularly in the early stages of their program they will need to adjust to the disciplinary and academic cultures of their universities. Making expectations transparent can assist learning but transition can be difficult and may take some students longer than others. The learning of all students can be enhanced if a staged introduction to academic literacies, subject content and the expectations of learning in an Australian university are incorporated into teaching practices.

#### What to look for

**Acknowledgement that teaching needs to take account of students as learners with a variety of skills and learning preferences**

Teaching strategies accommodate a range of different learning style preferences and encourage fit-for-purpose approaches to learning in all students.

Explanations are scaffolded and signposted with frequent pauses for reflection by students and the opportunity to ask questions.

A variety of teaching activities are used and students are given some choice of topic and task.

Examples, models and suggestions of ways of approaching learning in the discipline are discussed early in the program.

Lectures are recorded and available for students to review online. Outlines are provided.

**A focus on active learning techniques**

*Understand that students from different backgrounds value the opportunity to work with, learn from and contribute to richer understandings in the classroom\* (PPS-43, p. 7).\**

Teaching is student centred, for example, international and diverse cultured students are given specific non-threatening opportunities to contribute firstly within small groups and finally to the class as a whole.

Interest groups, debates, lectures and small group work with negotiated learning, peer learning and independent study are regular features of the learning environment regardless of mode.

Lectures are interactive, using a variety of techniques to ensure students are actively engaged. A range of technologies and questioning techniques are used.

Reading texts are appropriate to the level of study and, especially in the early stages of a program, guided questions are given to lead students to relevant points.

Note-taking skills, skimming and scanning techniques are taught and practised in class where appropriate. Academic language and learning staff are called on to assist with this where necessary.

Students are assisted to assess their own language and learning development. For example, in the early stages of the program teachers support students to become reflective and critical learners in formal reflective learning discussions.

**Students actively build their own knowledge and awareness of behaviours which are valued in Australian universities**

Students are assisted to understand specific communication scenarios such as participating in a group conversation, acknowledging a speaker before interrupting, making a contradictory point and how much eye contact is necessary.

Students are given opportunities to practise interactions and provided with peer or teacher feedback on their performance.

# 2

### Principle 2: Respect and adjust for diversity

Teachers can demonstrate and model a respect for diversity by adjusting their teaching strategies to the needs of students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Inclusive teaching strategies will accept that past experiences in learning impact on students' present performance and that all students bring valuable knowledge and experience to the classroom.

\* Quote from ALTC/OLT project. Please refer to back page of this guide for project details.

## What to look for

**The teacher engages with diversity on a personal and professional level**

*The ways in which teaching staff present themselves to students early in a teaching unit is critical for students initiating effective working relationships\* (CG6-38 p. 11).\**

The teacher prepares for his/her culturally diverse student group by:

- researching the cultural and linguistic profile of students
- learning how to pronounce students' names
- becoming aware of the general features of the education systems and teaching/learning practices of students' home countries
- having an understanding of the cultural norms and practices of students' cultures
- being familiar with the services available to international students and staff who work with them.

**The teacher models appropriate intercultural behaviour and displays cultural awareness**

The teacher makes allowance for religious events: e.g. Ramadan, such as starting earlier or accepting that Moslem students may be less alert because of fasting requirements.

The teacher is also aware that body language differs across cultures and factors this into their interpretation of students' behaviours.

**Teaching is structured so as to incorporate the experience and knowledge that international students can offer**

Some assignments and class tasks have an international component and students are encouraged to share experience and knowledge of their own countries and cultures.

Intercultural engagement is encouraged through use of strategies such as the 'jigsaw approach' which ensures that every student has a chance to contribute to the discussion of a topic. (See Hunt, Chalmers & Macdonald 2013, p. 31).

**The teacher helps students understand what is expected of them as learners in this program of study**

The development of English language, academic literacies and discipline specific discourse are specifically embedded into learning tasks, assessment tasks and weightings.

Glossaries and in class explanations of frequently used terms are provided.

Academic literacies are introduced by teaching or support staff and there are low risk opportunities for practising these. Feedback on performance is focussed on what students need to do to improve.

A variety of interactive activities are incorporated into lectures and small group tutorials.

## Principle 3: Provide context-specific information and support

3

The demands on learners vary in different contexts and across disciplines, programs and courses. Students from diverse backgrounds must not only learn new knowledge, often they must also learn new ways of learning and new ways to demonstrate what they have learned. They need to understand what is required of them and integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge. Teachers can assist this process by scaffolding the development of skills and knowledge in courses and across the program.

## What to look for

**Teachers do not assume background knowledge in relation to expected ways of behaving in the classroom**

The teacher is explicit about the purpose of lectures, the benefits of discussion based learning and links between out of class tasks and independent learning.

Expectations about participation in different types of learning activities are communicated early in the course to all students. These expectations are repeated in later stages of the program to ensure students who enter via different pathways at different stages are equally informed.

Teachers discuss the function of group work in learning, including intercultural group work in particular and how it will be assessed.

Teachers explain and model the behaviours most likely to lead to successful learning in the discipline.

Long reading lists identify key and optional readings.

## What to look for

### The development of academic literacies is embedded into program and course design

*Teaching and learning strategies included the need for discipline-specific tasks, examples and resources' (CG8-766, p. 22).\**

Teachers work with support services staff with specialised knowledge on embedding the development of academic literacies into course and assessment design.

Explanations of what different task requirements mean in the context of the discipline ('evaluate', 'justify', 'analyse') are included in assessment task descriptions.

Teachers are clear on what good performance is (including the weighting of components such as: grammar, vocabulary, content and structure) and communicate this to students by, for example, providing marking rubrics, models and exemplars for specific assessment tasks.

The teacher helps students with the demands of academic reading by, for example, discussing skimming and scanning techniques, methods of coping with large amounts of literature and giving guide questions and notes, especially in the early stages of the program. This is reinforced at later stages of the program.

Answers to FAQs are posted online.

Students are provided with a variety of ways to ask questions about task requirements. For example, in class and in moderated online forums.

### Teachers are approachable and accessible

Teachers invite questions during and after class, and online.

Expectations in relation to addressing and contacting lecturers and tutors are clearly and frequently communicated.

Consultation times are published and adhered to.

## 4

### Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement

Diversity has an impact on the dynamics of groups through its effect on the communication between students and between the teacher and the students. Creating environments conducive to interaction is an important foundation for meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement. The quality of learning and success of students are enhanced when they feel valued and part of the learning process. Bringing dialogue into the classroom and valuing the knowledge and experience of diverse students is an opportunity for students to learn, socialise and make meaning from the new information that is presented to them.

## What to look for

### The teacher structures activities which empower all students and those from diverse backgrounds in particular, to participate in class discussion and learning tasks

*Provide opportunities for 'clarifying chatter' by giving students time to discuss their understanding of a task in a small group and then have one student ask questions on behalf of the group (PPS-43, p. 85, ).\**

Small groups formulate and discuss questions related to lecture content and one person asks unresolved questions of the tutor on behalf of the small group.

Teachers pose questions or issues that students can discuss in pairs or small groups and then report back to the class.

Where group tasks require that international and domestic students work together roles are assigned for each member of the group, including discussion leader, timekeeper, note-taker and person to report back. This allows everyone to have a role in the group.

Quizzes and pair work encourage interaction among diverse students.

# 4

## What to look for

### Both international and local students develop intercultural communication skills

*In our course, it is always good to get a different point of view. Everyone has so many different ideas...Getting opinions and listening to people talk and think wow I never thought about that*  
 (Student, CG8-725, p. 17).\*

Different aspects of intercultural communication of relevance to professional practice are discussed in tutorials. For example, discussions about how to meet and greet in different cultures and how body language conveys different meanings in different contexts.

Intercultural awareness and communication skills are evidenced in assessment items through the inclusion of specific assessment criteria.

Case studies are used to present intercultural problems through stories and engage students in more contextualized discussions of culture.

Social interaction across cultures is encouraged, supported and rewarded in both the formal and the informal or co-curriculum.

# 5

## Principle 5: Be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence

Reflection and research form an indispensable arm of the scholarly process. Teachers should seek responses to their teaching from all students and analyse evidence and feedback provided by students from diverse cultural backgrounds. It may be necessary to seek advice from others on how best to respond to the feedback and in particular, on how to modify teaching approaches in order to maximise the learning of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Culturally inclusive teaching requires a certain amount of flexibility in planning, delivery and responsiveness to evidence showing a need for change.

### What to look for

#### The teacher engages with ongoing evaluation of their teaching to improve student learning

*"Diversity has changed the learning context in which academics operate"*  
 (PPS-43, p.7 ).\*

Teachers reflect on the success or otherwise of different teaching approaches considering, for example: How can I improve my approach? What engaged students the most this week?

Teachers give students opportunities to provide feedback on their teaching at different times and in different ways and tell students how they have responded to the feedback received.

#### Teachers monitor research into pedagogy and update teaching methods and approaches

Teachers engage in scholarly reading on teaching and learning.

Teachers conduct periodical action research projects which include monitoring the effectiveness of their teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse student groups and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions on these groups.

Teachers interact with peers at national and international conferences and seek peer feedback on their teaching practices.

Teachers monitor student engagement and satisfaction.

Performance review meetings include discussions of feedback on teacher performance provided by students from diverse backgrounds.

# 6

## Principle 6: Prepare students for life in a globalised world

Globalisation provides many opportunities and challenges. Students benefit from being exposed to a global perspective in their studies as they need to be aware of the increasing connections between peoples of the world. Teaching practices and curriculum design that are essentially ethnocentric in focus are unlikely to challenge stereotypes, contribute to greater equality, enhance understanding and appreciation of other cultures or prepare students for the international, intercultural and global context of their future lives.

### What to look for

<p><b>The development of cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills is embedded into teaching and learning tasks</b></p>	<p>Intercultural communication strategies are practised in class and all students are required to reflect on their effectiveness in working in intercultural groups in class.</p> <p>The way in which working in diverse groups in class has developed skills needed in a globalised world is emphasised to all students.</p> <p>Teachers model appropriate intercultural behaviours in class.</p> <p>All students are made aware through class discussions of how their implicit cultural assumptions may affect their judgement.</p>
<p><b>There is a focus on students' progressive development of the skills, knowledge and attitudes required of global citizens and professionals across the program</b></p>	<p>Teachers model respect for differing ways of seeing and knowing in other cultures.</p>
<p><b>Students participate in international exchange, international internships and short term study tours</b></p>	<p>Students are encouraged to take part in exchange programs to help them develop an international outlook. Students who have returned, share their experiences with their peers and with students in earlier stages of the program.</p> <p>A range of opportunities of varying lengths and intensities are provided for students to experience other linguistic and cultural contexts as part of their studies.</p> <p>Teacher-led programs as well as more independent options are available.</p> <p>Students receive credit towards completion of the degree for study undertaken abroad.</p> <p>Program design encourages students to study a foreign language across the degree program.</p>
<p><b>Career services have an international division</b></p>	<p>Students can access employment opportunities overseas and are aware of the possibilities available in their field and are guided to do so.</p>

## Related OLT Projects

CG8-766, *Investigating the efficacy of culturally specific academic literacy and academic honesty resources for Chinese students*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-efficacy-culturally-specific-academic-literacy-vu-2010>.

CG8-725, *Finding common ground: enhancing interaction between domestic and international students*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-enhancing-domestic-international-melbourne-2008>.

CG6-38, *Diversity: a longitudinal study of how student diversity relates to resilience and successful progression in a new generation university*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-diversity-longitudinal-study-how-ecu-2006>.

PPS-43, *Assessing students unfamiliar with assessment practices in Australian universities*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-assessing-students-unfamiliar-rmit-2005>.

PP10-1810, *Internationalisation at home: enhancing intercultural capabilities of business and health teachers, students and curricula*,

<http://www.olt.gov.au/project-internationalisation-home-enhancing-intercultural-capabilities-business-and-health-teachers->.

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