DEDI PART 3: DIVERSITY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

This Food for Thought is part of a special 4-part series exploring approaches to *Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion* (DEDI) in the context of teaching. We also encourage you to review York University's full 2023-2028 DEDI Strategy, which includes key principles, approaches, and strategies for the classroom and beyond.

WHAT IS IT?

As defined by the York University DEDI Strategy (2023) *diversity* refers to "[T]he presence of difference and variety of personal experiences, values and worldviews that arise from difference of culture and circumstance. Such differences encompass race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, age, class, religion, and spirituality, geographic location, and culture. Within universities, diversity also encompasses difference or variety in education, perspectives, opinions, heuristics, disciplines, skills, and learning styles" (York University Decolonizing, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028, p.10).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

By creating space for a diversity of voices, lived experiences and pedagogies in the classroom, educators can enrich the learning experience for all students. In these learning spaces, students are exposed to different perspectives, viewpoints and approaches that can expand and transform how they engage with and apply the subject matter. This exposure cultivates new and better insights while at the same time building capacity for critical thinking, empathy, effective communication and dialogic learning. Through this approach, educators can help to interrogate and disrupt knowledge-production structures which traditionally have centered dominant perspectives and approaches (i.e., Eurocentric, cis-gendered, able-bodied etc.) and create space for new forms of knowledge and learning.

HOW CAN INSTRUCTORS SUPPORT DIVERSITY IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?

1. **Promote a classroom culture that values diverse perspectives and experiential knowledge**. Encourage collaborative learning by providing opportunities for students to share their own lived experiences and learn from others. This strategy can have the added benefit of increasing engagement, as students may be more open to contributing to discussions that do not have a "right" or "wrong" answer.

2. **Use inclusive language and practices.** Avoid making assumptions about students' identities and backgrounds in class discussions and communications and provide opportunities (for example, during introductions) for students to self-identify and share pronouns. By modelling and normalizing these practices (for example, by sharing your own pronouns in your email signature, zoom name or in your first class, and encouraging students to do the same) you can take the burden off of students who may otherwise feel stigmatized or risk being misgendered.

3. **Incorporate diverse perspectives in the curriculum:** Your learning process will be enhanced when students have the opportunity to learn about a diversity of experiences and perspectives, particularly voices that have traditionally been marginalized in academic spaces. By ensuring your curriculum and content reflects diverse voices, and by inviting guest speakers and co-

educators into the learning space, you can further opportunities to reflect different forms of knowledge.

4. **Create opportunities for students to engage with diverse communities outside of the classroom.** By incorporating active and field-based learning into your curriculum, you can expose students to diverse approaches and frameworks within your discipline. This can include field trips/field based learning, project-based community partnerships or other forms of collaborative work.

5. **Engage diversity from the ground up:** the deepest level, you can build diversity into the curriculum from the ground up by seeking feedback and input on curriculum. This could be done through midterm and/or end of term surveys, or collaborating with others (including students, colleagues or other stakeholders) in the course development process. This helps to ensure that the content not only includes diverse perspectives, but is informed and shaped by them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (Internal)

York University Decolonizing, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, 2023-2028.
https://www.yorku.ca/dedi-strategy/

Black Inclusion at York: Framework and Action Plan for Addressing Anti-Black Racism.
https://www.yorku.ca/abr/

York Indigenous Framework. https://indigenous.yorku.ca/files/2017/08/Indigenous-Framework-for-York-University-A-Guide-to-Action.pdf

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (External)

Explore in 15-30 Minutes

University of Delaware Center for Teaching & Assessment of Learning. (n.d.). *Diversity and Inclusive Teaching: Strategies and Resources*. https://ctal.udel.edu/resources-2/inclusive-teaching/#:~:text=Teaching%20for%20diversity%20refers%20to,for%20inclusion%20signifies%20embracing%20difference.

Queens University in Charlotte (n.d.) *The Benefits of Diversity in Universities.*
https://online.queens.edu/resources/article/benefits-of-diversity-in-school/

Cornell University, Centre for Teaching Innovation (n.d.) *Teaching Resources for Incorporating Diversity.*
https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/designing-your-course/incorporating-diversity

Explore in 30-60 minutes

University of Southern California. (2020). *Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power, and Privilege*. https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/

Gurin, P., Dey, E. L., Hurtado, S., & Guring, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. Harvard Educational Review, 72(3), 330-366

Explore in 60+ minutes

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included : Racism and Diversity in Institutional life*. Duke University Press Books. https://www.dukeupress.edu/on-being-included

Experiential Learning Hub, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (2022). *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Practice.* Toronto Metropolitan University.
https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/ediinpractice/front-matter/introduction/

Smith, D. G. (2020). *Diversity's promise for higher education : making it work*. Johns Hopkins University Press. https://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title/12337/diversitys-promise-higher-education

Stewart, A. J., & Valian, V. (2018). An Inclusive Academy: Achieving Diversity and Excellence. *An Inclusive Academy*. https://direct.mit.edu/books/book/4114/An-Inclusive-AcademyAchieving-Diversity-and

Would you like to learn more?

Contact us at Teaching Commons for additional resources, handouts, applications, courses, workshops, examples, advice, assistance, one-on-one consulting, and everything else related to teaching and learning. We are happy and eager to assist you!

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