14. Supporting Diversity in the Classroom

VIU has a number of supports for faculty and students around ensuring diversity is welcomed and valued in the classroom.

- Disability Services: [http://www2.viu.ca/disabilityservices/](http://www2.viu.ca/disabilityservices/)
- International Students: [http://www2.viu.ca/international/InternationalStudentAdvising.asp](http://www2.viu.ca/international/InternationalStudentAdvising.asp)
- Aboriginal Students [http://www2.viu.ca/sas/](http://www2.viu.ca/sas/)
- Positive Space: [http://www2.viu.ca/PositiveSpace/](http://www2.viu.ca/PositiveSpace/)
- Human Rights Office: [http://www2.viu.ca/humanrights/](http://www2.viu.ca/humanrights/)

**Disabilities Services: Faculty Tips**
The following tips help faculty understand some key components around supporting students with disabilities.

**Obligation**
Vancouver Island University is committed to providing access to education for students with documented disabilities. All members of the VIU community have a shared responsibility to support and
enhance the academic success of students with disabilities through the provision of instructional and learning related accommodation.

We have a human rights obligation to accommodate students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities have met all admission requirements and are required to meet the same academic criteria and achieve the same competencies as non-disabled students.

To receive accommodation, students are required to self-identify and provide Disability Services with current official documentation from a registered medical assessor.

Documentation should be dated within the past 3-5 years and include:

- A clear diagnosis of disability
- Indication how disability impacts or impairs academic functioning
- Recommendations for appropriate academic accommodation

Documentation is reviewed with the student. The nature and type of reasonable academic accommodation are determined considering the student’s particular difficulties and the course requirements.

**Getting Started**

How do I support students with disabilities in my class?

Consider making the following announcement in class at the beginning of the semester:

“Students with documented disabilities requiring academic and/or exam accommodation need to contact Disability Services, Building 200, or phone 740-6446 to make an appointment”.

If a student with a disability is registered in your class, the student should provide you with a copy of the accommodation letter generated by Disability Services, specifying general and exam accommodation needs.

The student has been advised to meet with you privately during office hours to discuss arrangements for accommodation.
Acknowledge and be supportive of the student’s requirements. Come to a clear agreement regarding the implementation of the accommodation.

Try not to diagnose a disability. If you have concerns about a student’s health or academic needs, please refer the student to our office.

Accommodation
The purpose of academic accommodation is to provide equal opportunity to master the essentials of a post-secondary education.

Classroom Supports
Supports are set up by Disability Services based on recommendations from the certifying medical professional and in conjunction with the DSM V Manual.

These services are provided by paid support workers and include:

- Attendant – someone who provides personal care assistance.
- Note-taker – A student enrolled in the class who takes class notes by hand or by laptop.
- Study Partner – a student who reviews and clarifies class notes.
- Pro Tutor – someone who professionally assists the student with learning.
- Interpreter – someone who utilizes American Sign Language to communicate with the student.
- Captionist – an employee who uses a laptop to take notes for a student who has a hearing or visual impairment.

Other classroom accommodations

- Record lectures – uses recording device as method of taking notes due to the disability.
- Flexible deadlines – for assignments. To be discussed in advance with the instructor.
- Stand/move – student needs to be able to get up and move around in class.
- No spelling penalty – student should not be penalized for spelling unless required by curriculum.

Exam Accommodation
Exams can be written either in your Department or at Disability Services between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 pm (8:00-5:30 during finals)
Most students use our online system to request exam accommodation at Disability Services. Students must make the request one week in advance. Once they have submitted a request, instructors receive an email link to approve the request and submit the details.

Disability Services will proctor exams in a supervised accommodating environment while maintaining exam integrity and security.

Accommodation may include:

- Extra Time – time plus one half (e.g., 1 hour exam = 1 ½ hours to write).
- Split Exams – Exam broken up over a number of days.
- Assistive technology – use of software that reads the exam questions to the student and/or that they use to dictate their answers.
- Reader/scribe – some students still require a human reader and/or scribe.
- Computer – Use of a word processor for essay questions.
- Room Alone – Distraction free environment.
- Calculator – Calculator use for all math-related courses.

Evening Exams after 4:00 pm

Evening exams can be accommodated in Disability Services by arranging the time so that the student starts early, but does not finish until the rest of the class has started the exam.

Other alternatives include:

- Extra Time – Ask student to come early to begin the exam in your department, or arrange to have student write at Disability Services on the same day of the exam between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm.
- Room Alone – The student can write the exam in a nearby distraction free room or office in the department.

Attendance/Participation

A student may have to miss classes from time to time due to disability related medical conditions. When you receive the accommodation letter, it may be helpful to discuss with the student how you can work together if any classes are missed.

You cannot indicate to the student that they can’t pass if they miss classes because of medical reasons.
Special Furniture

On behalf of the student, Disability Services requests that Facilities move needed furniture to the classroom. The furniture is labeled in an attempt to keep furniture in the classroom for that semester.

Environmental Sensitivity

The following announcement can be made to the class:

“This classroom is a scent-free area. Please be sensitive to this situation and refrain from wearing strong scented products. Your cooperation is appreciated.”

Suggestions

- Make announcement 1st class.
- Network with colleagues.
- Review Accommodation Letter.
- Inform students about Accessibility Stations in library.
- Meet with student early in term and then regularly as needed.
- Come to a clear agreement regarding accommodation.
- Discuss any problems early on with the student.
- Help the student develop independence and self-advocacy skills.
- Visit the Disability Services website www.viu.ca/disabilityservices for resources to assist you in teaching students with a disability and to provide you with information regarding support services available to you and the student.

Supporting Students in the Classroom

Maureen Hewlett, Disabilities Advisor, UNBC
Reprinted with permission by William J. Owen, Editor, 2010 UNBC Teaching Manual

There are students with disabilities in your class. Each is unique and has specific needs. The following suggestions are just good teaching practice, but such practice is extremely helpful for students with disabilities. Included are some specific accommodations that would allow students with learning disabilities to achieve their full potential and enable you to accurately measure their knowledge.
Suggestions for the classroom

- make available a detailed course outline prior to the course commencement
- choose well-organized texts with reader aids (e.g., chapter summaries, glossaries, indexes)
- assign readings in advance, and if appropriate, provide an alternate, less demanding reading list
- make available clear lecture outlines at the beginning of each class
- teach definitions and terms
- use a multi-sensory approach including visual, oral, and hands-on learning techniques
- provide examples of the main concepts
- emphasize points
- clarify relationships
- encourage students to discuss and compare their notes with each other
- encourage students to form study groups
- allow time for questions
- allow the student to use a tape recorder during class
- post summary lecture notes and/or PowerPoint presentations on a secure course webpage

Suggestions regarding assignments

- explain assignments particularly clearly, both orally and in writing, with clear interim and final deadlines
- permit plenty of time for completion
- provide alternative assignment formats for students to enable demonstration of competence, e.g., class presentations, submission of assignments on audio or video tape
- encourage students with learning disabilities to discuss their writing assignments with Disability Services; money might be available for a tutor

Suggestions regarding exams

- give students plenty of time to complete exams
- give students information on exam format ahead of time. e.g., 30% multiple choice, 20% short answer, 50% essay format
- permit the use of calculators and dictionaries
- permit the students with learning disabilities to write exams in a quiet room free from visual/auditory distractions, with extra time
- permit an oral exam, taped responses, large print materials, etc.
- permit the use of scribes, computers and word processors or other such technical aids that may be appropriate
Working with International Students

Recognizing and Addressing Cultural Variations in the Classroom

Carnegie Mellon University produced this “Guide for Faculty” on Teaching in an Increasingly Multi-cultural setting. The Guide first addresses the different educational experiences and expectations that students from different backgrounds may possess, before proceeding on to suggestions for instructors. If you get beyond the American and institutional references in the first few pages, there are some valuable tips for faculty. http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/resources/PublicationsArchives/InternalReports/culturalvariations.pdf

Five Competencies for Culturally Competent Teaching
By Cheryl Irish and Monica Scrubb

Today’s classrooms require that instructors possess competencies for teaching all students. Robust instructional strategies and culturally sensitive curricula are critical, but more important is an instructor who is sensitive and responsive to the unique differences of each student. Recognizing the need to strengthen specific competencies to reach and teach all students requires an understanding of new ideas and a willingness to view instruction through varied cultural lenses.

A critical analysis of one’s own cultural assumptions is foundational to culturally-responsive teaching and learning. Critical reflection on tightly held cultural assumptions is necessary to dislodge misconceptions and stereotypes. Culturally-responsive teaching engages students in self-awareness activities that lead to reflection on cultural assumptions. For example, in situations where beliefs about learning vary diametrically, there may be serious
misunderstandings. When one student believes his learning is unrelated to timely arrival to class and another student views punctuality as a sign of respect, or when one student asks many questions and another quietly wrestles with issues in the content, each may struggle with respect or acceptance of the others. While all may be learning, each may view the others as lazy, disruptive, or disrespectful. Diverse instructional groupings allow students to learn about individual differences and to reflect on their own assumptions and beliefs.

To read the rest of the article:

**Intercultural Teaching Tips**

The following videos highlight the six building blocks or the basis of the Intercultural Knowledge and Competency Rubric. http://www.purdue.edu/cie/learning/global/teachingtips.html

**Teaching International Students: Strategies to Enhance Learning**

Research has highlighted that the educational expectations of international students are as diverse as those of domestic students (Biggs, 2003; Ryan, 2005). These students can range, for example, in academic ability, English language proficiency, motivation, educational experiences, as do many of the local students. However, there are some conclusions we can draw about the particular challenges facing international students that distinguish their experiences from those of domestic students.

These include the challenges of:

- learning and living in a different culture;
- learning in a foreign university context;
- learning while developing English language proficiency; and
- learning the academic disciplinary discourse.

Research has found that academics are aware of the learning needs of their students, but may be unclear about how best to address those needs (Ryan, 2005). The purpose of this document is to encourage the use of different strategies and approaches that have been informed by research in the area of international students’ learning in
western higher education contexts.

The key areas that are discussed in some detail include:

• Internationalising the curriculum
• Making lectures accessible
• Encouraging participation in small group work
• Adopting an educative approach to plagiarism
• Supporting students in developing critical thinking skills
• Explaining assessment expectations

The University of Melbourne published this wonderful document out of their Centre for the Student of Higher Education, entitled, “Teaching International Students: Strategies to Enhance Learning” by Sophie Arkoudis.


What Helps Me Learn: Videos from VIU International Students

The Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning recorded international students and asked them what helped them learn.

This collection of videos is an excellent resource for faculty working with international students.

Videos can be viewed on VIUTube:
https://viutube.viu.ca/category/Teaching%26Learning%3E6_What%2BHelps%2BMe%2BLearn/147

Resources for Faculty

Thompson Rivers University has published a Resource for Academic Departments in becoming globally minded campus. Parts II (Working with International Students) and III (Internationalization) might be helpful for VIU faculty. See link for access to document http://www.tru.ca/_shared/assets/gmc6666.pdf

Web Links on Internationalization and Intercultural
http://www.tru.ca/ctl/support/intercultural_learning/resources.html
Working with Aboriginal Students

It is important to consider our Aboriginal Students success in our curriculum and teaching processes. See Aboriginal Students Support Services for information: http://www2.viu.ca/sas/

Teaching for Indigenous Education

UBC has a site “Teaching for Indigenous Education” filled with lots of resources on relationships, knowledge, history, pedagogy, curriculum, community, languages and transformation. See http://www.indigenouseducation.educ.ubc.ca/

Key Learning Ideas from UBC Site:
This topic supports the following key learning ideas:

- Knowledge holders play a pivotal role in facilitating intergenerational, experiential, and ceremonial learning. Indigenous knowledge holders include people (e.g., Elders), other than humans (e.g., land), and more than humans (e.g., transformers, tricksters).
- Indigenous pedagogies engage learning processes that are holistic and multimodal. Some of these include storytelling, land-based experiences, intergenerational learning, and ceremony.
- Learning in Indigenous languages represents an important pedagogy for transmitting worldviews, as well as honouring and advancing Indigenous knowledges and identity.
- Indigenous pedagogies are contextual and intimately connected to language and place.
- Indigenous pedagogies are informed by protocols. This means that there are systematic rules to how educators work with Indigenous knowledges.
- Key questions for dialogue and teacher reflection include: What pedagogies shape my approaches to teaching? How do the pedagogies I rely on compare and contrast to Indigenous pedagogies? How might I begin to incorporate Indigenous pedagogies into my teaching with attention to Indigenous protocols?

"The time is right for a concerted and cooperative effort that creates transformational education by rejecting the 'status quo,' moving beyond 'closing the gap' discourse, and contributing to the well-being of Indigenous peoples and their communities".

Accord on Indigenous Education, 2011, p. 2
At Thompson Rivers University, in 2010 they published a “Handbook for Educators of Aboriginal Students” and it can be freely accessed at http://www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/albaa_handbook23430.pdf

The handbook outlines the key aspects of what educators need to know:

- An understanding of the history of the education of Aboriginal peoples explains the present and provides direction for the future.
- Aboriginal prehistory dates back thousands of years—“since time immemorial.”
- The maintenance of oral traditions is critical to Aboriginal peoples.
- Colonization has tried to systemically destroy Aboriginal cultures, languages, and traditions.
- Colonization is often found embedded in texts and pedagogy in the mainstream educational system, sometimes referred to as the “hidden curriculum”, creating a legacy of colonial constructs that includes stereotypes and racist attitudes.
• The legacy of the Residential School experience is multi-generational and survivors still suffer traumatic effects. There are several films documenting the Residential School experience. Students should not be required to view these films.
• The “Sixties Scoop” has compounded the effects of separation of children from families with consequences still felt today.
• Although decolonization is challenging deep-rooted Eurocentric attitudes and practices, the process is not complete.

There are many resources on Thompson Rivers “Aboriginal Education Resources” site for Faculty. Check it out http://www.tru.ca/aero/faculty.html

What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom

See http://www.whatilearnedinclasstoday.com/

What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom is a research project that explores difficult discussions of Aboriginal issues that take place in classrooms at the University of British Columbia. Students frequently report troubling and sometimes traumatic discussions of cultural issues in class. These situations often affect their ability to function in their coursework, and even their ability to return to class.

The project looks at how the challenges around talking about race work as an educational barrier at the classroom level. This is something that has not been sufficiently addressed in educational institutions, and yet, is something that desperately needs to be discussed.

Classrooms, especially classrooms at major institutions like UBC, are becoming increasingly diverse and require attention in order to have effective cross-cultural discussions. This project works to improve the conversations around politically and culturally sensitive issues in a classroom by asking: how does cultural communication happen in a classroom, and how can it be improved?

Developed in the First Nations Studies Program at UBC, this project examines the experiences of students, instructors, and administrators at the university to make these problems visible, better
understand how difficulties arise, and to find ways to have more professional and productive classroom discussions.

**Best Practices that Contribute to Positive Aboriginal Learning Experiences**

As part of its Aboriginal Education Action Plan, CMEC has collected best practices in Aboriginal education from each province and territory. A best practice is an initiative, project, strategy, program, or procedure that produces an outstanding result according to set criteria, is adaptable and transferable, and is validated by educators and local Aboriginal community groups. The criteria for what is considered a best practice are as follows:

- improved academic outcomes
- increased community wellness
- partnership between jurisdiction(s) and stakeholders
- increased student well-being, self-confidence, identity, values, pride, personal development, or competence
- sharing of materials
- positive link to employment
- inclusion of Aboriginal content or perspective
- increased participation in the education system
- active participation in community life

The best practices listed here are practices that contribute to positive Aboriginal learning experiences, improved student well-being, increased success for Aboriginal students, and improved labour-market linkages for Aboriginal people. Jurisdictions collaborated with local Aboriginal groups and organizations to obtain a complete collection of best practices that have been applied in the community and have measurable outcomes.


**Building Bridges Together**

This workbook was designed by the Vancouver Foundation of the Social Planning and Research Council of BC to plan for intercultural dialog between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Peoples.

*[http://www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/bbt_workbook23518.pdf](http://www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/bbt_workbook23518.pdf)*
Redefining how Success is Measured in Aboriginal Learning

This report by the Canadian Council on Learning offers a summary of the development, content and use of the three holistic lifelong learning modules. [http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning/RedefiningSuccessModelsFirstNations.html](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning/RedefiningSuccessModelsFirstNations.html)

The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model represents the link between First Nations lifelong learning and community well-being, and can be used as a framework for measuring success in lifelong learning.

For First Nations people, the purpose of learning is to honour and protect the earth and ensure the long-term sustainability of life. To illustrate the organic and self-regenerative nature of First Nations learning, the Holistic Lifelong Learning Model uses a stylistic graphic of a living tree. The tree depicts the cycles of learning for an individual and identifies the influences that affect individual learning and collective well-being.

Canadian Council on Learning: Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre

This knowledge centre was a national collaborative forum to support the development of solutions to the barriers that First Nations, Metis and Inuit learners encounter and what their 'learning spirit' journey has been. Outcomes include promising practices, several publications, literature reviews, videos and dialogue.

See [http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/)

“Education is not filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.”
— William Butler Yeats