

## Teaching In Diverse Classrooms

In preparation for teaching in classrooms, we suggest that you:

1. Assume a diverse classroom:

- Create flexible learning processes that account for the variety of learning styles that may exist in any classroom.
- Design instruction and materials with a diverse group of students in mind.
- Think about ground rules or norms that will guide the learning that is to occur.
- When appropriate, develop a session that explores multiple perspectives on the topic.
- Make it clear that sexist and homophobic language, including use of the term 'gay' as a pejorative label, does not have a place within the tutorial environment.
- Be selective and sensitive with your language, i.e. be aware of words that might have negative connotations when discussing/referring to sexuality and gender/sex diversity. Use language that expresses inclusivity.
- Never assume someone's sexuality, unless they have disclosed.
- Use gender neutral pronouns for inferred partners – don't assume a heterosexual relationship.
- If you are not sure of someone's gender use neutral pronouns.
- For transgender students use the personal pronouns that the student uses.
- Do not assume people want to be labelled.
- Keep queer\*-friendly material (posters, flyers etc) in your office space.

2. Make the classroom accessible to all students:

- Create opportunities to get to know your students as individuals.
- Invite student participation.
- Create opportunities for students to interact in class with each other in respectful and meaningful ways.
- Generate a challenging but vibrant learning process that encourages students to develop their creative, critical, and analytical thinking skills.
- Be a role model for students through your own active participation in the learning process.

3. Confront potential issues of discrimination and manage hot moments

- Devise personal strategies in advance for managing yourself and the class in such moments
- Interrupt blatantly discriminatory behaviours when they emerge in class. For example, negative language, such as the use of the term “gay” as a pejorative term, should be recognised as discriminatory and as warranting interruption.
- Defuse potentially harmful moments by having students step back and reflect on the situation.
- Turn potentially hot moments into powerful learning experiences by turning the questions they raise back to the group for discussion.
- When preparing for tutorial discussions, be conscious of using language that allows for diversity. Consider scenarios that don’t assume “boy-girl relationships” and the “mother, father, children” family unit.

4. Assess one's own biases:

- Develop an understanding of how your experiences, values, beliefs, and stereotypes may influence your knowledge and understanding of groups that are different from your own.
- Examine how your own experiences, values, beliefs, and stereotypes inform the way you interact with individuals whose backgrounds are different from your own.
- Assess how your own experiences, values, beliefs and stereotypes affect the way you behave in the classroom.
- Our own level of comfort and knowledge about issues relating to gender/sex identity and sexual orientation might result in our inadvertently fostering a space which may not be welcoming for some students. If you are uncomfortable or don't understand, seek assistance.

Assembled from ideas and advice from OUSA as well as:

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## **Workshops and guidelines**