

Beyond cultural differences

Intercultural orientation
workshops for newly
arrived students

Acknowledgements

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This Workshop Manual: This manual is intended as a resource to accompany the 'Beyond Cultural Differences' workshop materials. It aims to provide facilitators with a detailed overview of workshop activities as well as techniques and tips for the successful preparation and delivery of the workshops. It is aimed at both student facilitators as well as higher education (HE) practitioners working with newly arrived students. The workshops can be integrated as part of induction events or can be used as one-off events throughout the academic year.



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Background

Orientation provision for newly arrived international students tends to take an overly simplistic and uncritical approach aimed at 'helping' international students to adapt to a 'new' environment by teaching them about cultural differences. This perpetuates a deficit-view of international students as the 'cultural other' and reinforces an 'us-them' narrative. Research suggests that international students are routinely othered or homogenised, disregarding the multidimensional experiences within this group (Glass et al., 2022; Mittelmeier et al., 2022) and the many similarities they share with their domestic peers.

Current orientation provision also overwhelmingly takes an uncritical and differentialist approach that over-emphasises cultural differences and portrays study abroad as inherently challenging and problematic.

The 'beyond cultural differences' workshops aim to bring together any newly arrived students, whether 'international' or not, to support them to develop intercultural competencies based on the UNESCO 'story circles' method. The workshops were co-created with international students and are evidence-based, informed by the latest research on intercultural transitions in higher education.

The workshops aim to:

- (1) enable reciprocal dialogue and intercultural learning among student participants.
- (2) empower critical self-reflection rather than solely acquisition of factual knowledge about the host environment.
- (3) support students to develop intercultural competencies that will enable them to operate effectively and confidently in an increasingly multicultural and multilingual world.

The built-in flexibility means the workshops can be delivered online or in-person.

Facilitators' guide

This part of the document includes some practical information for facilitators and what you might want to consider when running the workshops.

- I. Familiarise yourself with each activity and material so you have an idea of how to best run them.
- II. The timings for each activity are just an estimate, please adapt depending on the number of attendees.
- III. Make sure you have brought everything you need for each workshop (some activities require sticky notes, colourful pens, paper etc.) and that you have printed any additional materials needed for each workshop as per the workshop plan (or be creative if you want to avoid printing!).
- IV. Be mindful of people who don't want to share – no one is obliged to share anything personal or anything that would be out of their comfort zone. Never make anyone share anything that they might be uncomfortable with.
- V. As much as you can, try to create a safe environment in which attendees feel comfortable sharing.

Overview of the workshops

This part of the document outlines all practical information useful for facilitators of the workshops. Each part outlines the specific workshop, provides an overview of what the participants will have done and explored, and it outlines the structure for each workshop with approximate timings and references to specific PowerPoint slides which have been created to support the delivery of these workshops and which are attached in Appendix A as well as in the resource pack.

Workshop 1: Identity (105 min)

Overview

The first workshop is intended to help the participants get to know each other, as well as think about some common stereotypes attached to questions around one's origin. The main questions to be discussed during this workshop include "Who are you?" and "Where are you 'really' from?".

Participants will explore different shades of their identities; observe any similarities or differences they might have with others and share an event or events that influenced an aspect or multiple aspects of their identity.

At the end, they will collaboratively reflect on the experience and the lessons learned.

Workshop plan

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Ice breaker	Introductory round; slide 2	<p>The students are asked to introduce themselves spontaneously in 45 seconds.</p> <p>No further guidance will be provided as this activity should shed some light on what they naturally say when introducing themselves, which should hopefully offer insights into who they think they are/who they think they should present in front of others.</p> <p>Participants will answer randomly, starting with the person whose birthday is closest to the day and continuing alphabetically.</p>	Each participant to have up to 45 seconds. [depending on participants allow at least 20min]
Who are you?	Introductory round; slide 3	<p>Participants will be given different scenarios to explore who they are in different contexts to understand how many 'layers' there are to one's identity.</p> <p>They will have 1 min or less to react to each scenario.</p> <p>The aim is for them to start seeing some commonalities between them and others, despite their different backgrounds.</p>	Each participant to have up to 1 minute. [depending on the number of participants allow 20–30min]
What makes you 'you'?	Slide 4	<p>Participants will be asked to write down 7 aspects of their identity in 5 min, for example a student, sister, over-achiever etc. Afterwards they will be asked to cross out 3 aspects in 2 min. Then they will be asked to cross out another 2 in 2min. The remaining 3 should be the very core of their identity.</p> <p>Participants don't need to share.</p>	10min

Workshop 1: Identity (105 min) – Workshop plan (continued)

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Story circle	The core round; slide 5	<p>In small groups (4-6 people), participants will have about 20 min (3min each) to answer the prompt.</p> <p>Remind them of the rules and attend each group separately in case there are any questions.</p> <p>Remind them that they will be asked to reflect on each other's stories, hence active listening is very important.</p>	3 minutes
Story circle	The core round; slide 6	<p>Informs participants that they will go through 2 rounds in their groups.</p> <p>During round 1 (core round), each participant will have up to 3 minutes to react to the prompt.</p> <p>During round 2 (flashback round), each participant will have up to 1 minute to share the most memorable moment/story/lesson from another group member's story.</p>	30 minutes (20 minutes for round 1, 10 minutes for round 2)
Debrief	Reflective part; slide 7	<p>When participants return to the plenary, discuss how they felt, what lessons they learned, what was the most memorable.</p> <p>Note, this is not time to share individual stories, more to reflect on the experience as a whole and lessons learned.</p>	15 minutes

Workshop 2: Cultural values and beliefs (105 min)

Overview

The second workshop allows participants to explore the cultural values and beliefs they might have. It is aimed at creating an awareness that values and beliefs are not only influenced by our 'cultures', but also by the social contexts one is in. This workshop is not intended to change people's beliefs, rather to make them aware of what beliefs they might have and how these relate to those of others around them.

Almost every human behaviour is learned, hence why it is natural for people to have specific beliefs about themselves, others, different activities and how the world 'should function'. However, to successfully coexist with other cultures and gain intercultural competencies, it is important to learn that the beliefs one holds are not universal and can vary across individuals.

Workshop plan

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Ice breaker	Introductory round; slide 2	Participants are going to introduce themselves saying their name, where they are from and three words that describe them (without any more context/explanation given).	10 minutes
Cultural values and beliefs	Introductory round; slide 3	Participants will be given different scenarios to explore who they are in different contexts to understand how many 'layers' there are to one's identity. They will have 1 min or less to react to each scenario. The aim is for them to start seeing some commonalities between them and others, despite their different backgrounds.	12–15 minutes
The culture test	Slide 4	Participants will be divided into groups of 3–4 and put into small groups (or breakout rooms in case of online delivery) in which they will discuss 25 questions about their 'cultures' (see Appendix A). Upon their return to the plenary, they will feed back and report on how it felt to discuss these questions with others, whether they were able to find common ground despite of perhaps being from different countries and whether anything surprised them.	30 minutes

Workshop 2: Cultural values and beliefs (105 min) – Workshop plan (continued)

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Story circle	Slide 5–6	<p>Firstly, remind participants of the rules and importance of active listening for understanding.</p> <p>Afterwards, show them the prompt for the core round of their breakout session and the following flashback round. Allow 3 minutes per participant to answer question 1, and 1 minute per participant to answer question 2.</p>	30 minutes (20 minutes for round 1, 10 minutes for round 2)
Debrief	Slide 7	<p>When participants return to the main room, discuss how they felt, what lessons they learned, what was the most memorable.</p> <p>Note, this is not time to share individual stories, more to reflect on the experience as a whole and lessons learned.</p>	15 minutes
Take-away thought	Slide 8	Allow participants to think about the last question for 2 minutes. It reflects on how they felt when they were the only 'different' person but from the perspective of being in a racial or cultural minority. Volunteers can share their opinions if they wish.	5–7 minutes

Workshop 3: Diversity (75 min)

Overview

This workshop focuses on exploring diversity. Participants will be encouraged to look for similarities especially with people who seem different from them, and will be asked to report back on that experience.

Afterwards, the group will watch a video about a diversity story, and reflect on what made them who they are, what experiences and events shaped their personalities, values and beliefs, and they will share these in their small groups.

Workshop plan

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Let's get to know each other	Slide 2	<p>There might be participants that don't know each other but to make it more interactive, they will have to introduce each other.</p> <p>Participants will be asked to find a person they don't know (that well) and find out some information about them shown on the slide, and any more information they are interested in.</p> <p>Afterwards, they will be asked to introduce their partner(s) to the group on their behalf.</p>	15–20 minutes
Now talk to someone...	Slide 3	<p>Ask participants to find someone who seems different from them based on the previous activity.</p> <p>Ask them to find 1 thing they have in common.</p> <p>Afterwards, ask random participants to choose a box and answer the hidden question.</p>	5–7 minutes for first part, 5–7 minutes for second part

Workshop 3: Diversity (75 min) – Workshop plan (continued)

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Story circle – rules	Slide 4	Remind people of rules before giving starting the sharing round.	1 minute
Story circle – part 1	Slide 5	Show participants the prompt for the core round. Ask them to share in their little groups and for each participant to express themselves in 3 minutes or less.	15 minutes
Story circle – part 2	Slide 75	After all groups have had time to share, show them the reflection prompt and allow 1 minute per participant.	5 minutes
Debrief	Slide 6	<p>When all groups finish sharing, discuss how they felt, what lessons they learned, what was the most memorable.</p> <p>Note, this is not time to share individual stories, more to reflect on the experience AS A WHOLE and lessons learned.</p>	15 minutes
Conclusion	Slide 7	Thank participants for sharing their stories and being respectful. Tell them that they are welcome to stay longer and network, and facilitators will leave.	5 minutes

Workshop 4: Personal values (110 min)

Overview

This workshop will help the students explore their own personal values which might help them understand that every person has values of their own. Hopefully, this should allow them to respect different values and different perspectives, whilst getting to know themselves better to understand and affect their own behaviour.

Workshop plan

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Ice breaker – part 1	Slide 2	<p>As a short ice-breaker activity, students will be assigned to random groups and will be asked to collaboratively choose 3 out of the 7 displayed items.</p> <p>This should help them to get to know each other and start thinking about what is important to them.</p>	10 minutes for discussion, 3 minutes for each group to present their ideas
Ice breaker – part 2	Slide 3	<p>This time, the scenario and groups remain. However, students will be able to choose any 3 items they wish.</p>	10 minutes for discussion, 3 minutes for each group to present their ideas
Personal values exploration	Slide 4	<p>Students will complete an activity to explore their values in the assigned groups.</p> <p>Materials needed: coloured paper (5 piles of different colours), pens</p> <p>Instruct each participant to take four slips of paper from each colour pile and spread out their pieces of paper in front of them.</p> <p>Colour 1 prompt: Ask each person to write down on their colour 1 cards, a physical object, product, or item they feel they need in order to function on a daily basis (e.g., car, food, computer). Once everyone has finished, ask each person to share 1-2 objects that they wrote down with the group.</p> <p>Colour 2 prompt: Ask each person to write down on their colour 2 pieces of paper, a geographical location that is especially important to them (e.g., grandparents' house, beach). Once everyone has finished, ask each person to share 1-2 locations that they wrote down with the group.</p>	60 minutes

Workshop 4: Personal values (110 min) – Workshop plan (continued)

Personal values exploration (continued)	Slide 4	<p>Colour 3 prompt: Ask each person to write down on their colour 3 cards, persons who have made them who they are today. This prompt could have a positive, negative, or mixed valence to it. Once everyone has finished, ask each person to share 1–2 persons that they wrote down with the group.</p> <p>Colour 4 prompt: Ask each person to write down on their colour 4 cards, personal or professional goals that they have for themselves (both short- and long-term timelines are acceptable). Once everyone has finished, ask each person to share 1–2 to goals they wrote down and a brief explanation as to why they chose those particular goals.</p> <p>Colour 5 prompt: Ask each person to write down on their colour 5 pieces of paper, four significant memories that they always want to remember. Depending on the time, have people share 1–2 to memories. Note: memories are often told in story form and can therefore last longer.</p> <p>Reflection & card elimination: Ask participants to eliminate cards until they have their 'top 5' cards left.</p> <p>Sharing: Ask participants to turn to the person next to them and have a conversation about the slips of paper they each have in front of them. The, invite pairs to return to the larger group and share a meaningful piece of their partnered conversation with the larger group.</p> <p>Value identification: Ask participants to take any two of the remaining cards that are particularly salient at the moment and think of one 'representative' word/label that adequately captures what this item, place, person, memory, or goal means to them.</p> <p>Adapted from: www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/theory-knowledge/201802/personal-value-exploration-experiential-activity</p>	60 minutes
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Workshop 4: Personal values (110 min) – Workshop plan (continued)

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Story circle	Slide 5	<p>Students will be asked to share their stories attached to the values they were left with. Remind them to stay respectful and listen to each other attentively.</p> <p>Afterwards, ask students to do a flashback round during which they will have a minute to reflect on the most memorable story they heard from someone else.</p>	3 minutes each for sharing
Debrief	Slide 6	Students will be asked to report on how it felt to share their stories and what lessons they learned during the exercise.	15 minutes

Workshop 5: Self-awareness (75 min)

Overview

Self-awareness is an essential part of becoming culturally competent. By being aware of one's own culture people can better understand how it may influence the way they communicate with others. This self-awareness allows individuals to become more sensitive to potential cultural differences that could lead to misunderstandings or communication breakdowns. Therefore, this last workshop brings the attention back towards oneself and highlighting the importance of being able to 'look inside' first.

Workshop plan

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Ice breaker	Slide 2	Each student will have 30 seconds to say their name and 1 piece of information related to their identity.	Depending on number of people, but it shouldn't last longer than 10–15 minutes.
What does self-awareness mean to you?	Slide 3	<p>Students should start thinking about what self-awareness means to them. The facilitator will introduce it by saying: Self-awareness is an essential part of being culturally competent. Understanding ourselves by being aware of our identities and perspectives is a steppingstone to understanding how other identities are constructed and how we relate to others.</p> <p>Then, the facilitator asks what self-awareness means to the participants.</p> <p>Then, the facilitator explains the self-awareness wheel displayed: A self-awareness and identity wheel serves as a visual representation of the different parts of an individual's personal, social, and cultural characteristics; it illustrates the construction of our self-perception and identity.</p>	8–10 minutes

Workshop 5: Self-awareness (75 min) – Workshop plan (continued)

What does self-awareness mean to you? (continued)	Slide 3	<p>At the centre of the wheel, you find your unconscious self, comprising who you are as an individual and the elements of your identity that are mostly static and unchangeable. On the outside, you find your conscious development and how you describe yourself based on achievements and what you have gained through studying or working formally and informally. Your geography helps you position yourself in relation to where you live and how you relate to your surroundings. Your choices involve that part of your identity that reflects how you navigate your adult life and the decisions you make along the way. Your perceptions refer to your self-awareness regarding how you believe you are perceived and how you perceive others. Your engagement highlights the way you relate to others around, who is included in your circle of friends, and the extent to which you reach out of your circle of commonality. A part of your identity that combines experiences and challenges is represented as your struggles, which you should learn to recognise to help you understand other people's pains and troubles. Finally, your goals are part of your identity because they represent what drives you and what you are aiming for, whether at the personal, cultural, or societal level.</p> <p>Source of activity: ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcompetence/chapter/setting-the-scene/</p>	8–10 minutes
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Workshop 5: Self-awareness (75 min) – Workshop plan (continued)

Title	Part in PP	Description	Time
Creating a self-awareness profile	Slides 4–6	<p>Participants will create their own self-awareness profile by answering questions related to the 8 aspects of the identity wheel displayed earlier. They will have about 10 minutes for each set of questions but there is no need to answer all questions. Allow them to choose the ones that resonate with them the most, ensuring that they have at least 1 piece of information for each aspect of the identity wheel – see Appendix B for full set of questions.</p> <p>Note to facilitator: Make sure you inform participants that there will be questions across 3 slides – this might avoid burnout as they will be expecting more questions to come.</p> <p>Source of activity: ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcompetence/chapter/setting-the-scene/</p>	30 minutes – 10 minutes per slide
Story circle	Slide 8	<p>Students will be asked to share a story that is related to one aspect of their identity they noted during the identity wheel activity, and that they believe really shaped who they are. Remind them to stay respectful and listen to each other attentively.</p> <p>Afterwards, ask students to do a flashback round during which they will have a minute to reflect on the most memorable story they heard from someone else.</p>	3 minutes each for sharing

Appendices

Appendix A – ‘The culture test’; Workshop 2: Cultural values and beliefs

‘The Culture Test’; Workshop 2: Cultural values and beliefs

During this task, please discuss the following questions with your team members. You can base your answers in your primary culture you grew up in, or other culture you might be living in now and identify with more. Remember, stay respectful and listen for understanding when other people justify their answers.

- 1. To get directions, people:**
 - Use a map or GPS.
 - Ask other people.
 - Pray for guidance.
- 2. Job skills are acquired by:**
 - Apprenticing and observing.
 - Receiving sacred knowledge.
 - Formal education.
- 3. The sick are treated by:**
 - Ritual prayers and sacrifices.
 - A doctor’s prescription.
 - A traditional natural remedy.
- 4. An offended person:**
 - Gets revenge or withdraws.
 - Pursues justice.
 - Places a curse.
- 5. A birthmark is:**
 - Harmless.
 - An omen or sign.
 - An embarrassing blemish.
- 6. When introducing themselves, people state:**
 - An alternate name to conceal birth name.
 - Their full name and title.
 - Their first name and occupation.
- 7. People read holy writings for:**
 - Heritage and identity.
 - Guidance and instruction.
 - Protection and blessings.
- 8. Misdeeds primarily affects the offender’s:**
 - Internal conscience.
 - Fate.
 - Public reputation.
- 9. People avoid trash dumps because they:**
 - Defile people.
 - Are unhygienic and smelly.
 - Are where spirits reside.
- 10. The key to starting a successful business is:**
 - Performing a religious ritual.
 - Having the right contacts.
 - Writing a good business plan.
- 11. People in danger get protection from:**
 - Police.
 - Magical practices.
 - Friends.
- 12. The concept of ‘family’ includes:**
 - Parents, spouse, and children.
 - All extended relations.
 - Extended relations and deceased ancestors.
- 13. Parents admonish children to:**
 - Appease unseen forces.
 - Fulfil their own interests and passions.
 - Observe community expectations.

14. People long for:

- Security and peace.
- Status and face.
- Equality and fairness.

15. Truth comes from:

- Tradition and consensus.
- Facts and science.
- Mysticism and pragmatism.

16. When taking a road trip, people:

- Take the shortest route.
- Visit family along the way.
- Avoid 'dark' areas.

17. Infertility is resolved by:

- Getting a new spouse.
- Visiting a holy person or shrine.
- Seeking medical treatment.

18. After bad behaviour, people feel:

- Anxious.
- Remorseful.
- Inferior.

19. Weddings usually start:

- Near the scheduled time.
- When key people arrive.
- At a propitious time or lucky day.

20. Food is acquired from:

- The local market.
- Wild nature.
- A supermarket.

21. People over 70 years old are considered:

- Respected.
- Powerful.
- Obsolete.

22. Leaders maintain relationships with:

- Their followers.
- Influential people.
- Spiritual powers.

23. People are expected to act according to:

- Roles and expectations.
- Right and wrong.
- Techniques and tactics.

24. People with money:

- Use it to help others and foster relationships.
- Protect it from unfortunate harm.
- Save it in banks.

25. Where a guest sits at a meal:

- May affect what happens tomorrow.
- Indicates their status and age.
- Is randomly chosen.

Appendices

Appendix B – ‘The Self-awareness and identity wheel’; Workshop 5: Self-awareness

My Self-Awareness and Identity Profile

<p>My unconscious self</p> <p>How old am I / how old do I feel?</p> <p>How do I define my gender identity and sexual orientation?</p> <p>Do I have any disabilities or have to make any adjustments?</p> <p>With what racial group do I identify?</p> <p>With what cultural group with a common national origin do I associate?</p> <p>Am I bicultural?</p>	<p>My conscious development</p> <p>Where did I go to school?</p> <p>What have I studied so far?</p> <p>Have I studied or worked abroad?</p> <p>Have I taken time to learn other languages?</p> <p>What kind of work experience do I have?</p> <p>What is important for my personal/professional development?</p>
<p>My geography</p> <p>Where was I born?</p> <p>Where have I lived?</p> <p>Where is home for me?</p> <p>Where do I pray or meditate?</p> <p>Where do I study or work?</p> <p>Where do I shop?</p>	<p>My choices</p> <p>Am I a religious person?</p> <p>What political views do I support?</p> <p>How would I describe my personal style?</p> <p>What are my personal habits or preferences?</p>
<p>My perceptions</p> <p>How am I perceived by my family, acquaintances, and people who do not know me?</p> <p>How do I perceive others through my own unconscious biases and stereotypes?</p>	<p>My engagement</p> <p>How do I engage with relatives, peers at university/work, and neighbours?</p> <p>What clubs do I belong to?</p> <p>How do I participate in my community?</p> <p>How diverse is my group of friends?</p>
<p>My struggles</p> <p>Based on my abilities, experiences, or challenges related to any aspect of my identity: What has been difficult for me?</p> <p>What challenges have I faced?</p> <p>When have I been in a privileged position?</p> <p>When have I experienced being racialised?</p>	<p>My goals</p> <p>Where are most of my goals concentrated?</p> <p>What is important for me at the personal level?</p> <p>How do I intend to develop myself in relation to culture learning? How am I contributing to the positive transformation and well-being of the society?</p>

