

# Intercultural Teaching Competence: A Multicultural Framework for Instructor Reflection

## What is Intercultural Teaching Competence (ITC)?

Intercultural teaching competence is “the ability of instructors to interact with students in a way that supports the learning of students who are linguistically, culturally, socially or in other ways different from the instructor or from each other, across a very wide definition of perceived difference and group identity” (Dimitrov et. al., 2014, p. 89). Intercultural teaching competence enables instructors to bridge cultural, linguistic or other differences in the classroom, communicate successfully across disciplinary cultures (Dimitrov, 2012), and establish meaningful relationships with and among students in order to facilitate learning and promote student engagement. In addition, intercultural teaching competence also includes the ability to model intercultural competence for students in the classroom and to facilitate dialogue about global issues using respectful, inclusive, and culturally relevant teaching strategies. Interculturally competent instructors are open to diverse ways of knowing (Archibald, 2008; Haig-Brown, 2008), are reflective in their approaches to assessment and curriculum design (Paige, 1996; Hermida, 2010) and promote multiple perspectives when they select content, readings, and learning activities (Deardorff, 2011).

## Components of Intercultural Teaching Competence

The ITC framework includes 3 subsets of intercultural competencies: **foundational competencies** encompass an instructor’s knowledge of their own positionality and ability to respond to difference; **facilitation competencies** focus on the instructor’s ability to create a safe, inclusive learning environment and promote dialogue in the classroom; and **curriculum design competencies** include an ability to enrich the curriculum with diverse perspectives through the selection of content, learning activities, assessments, and modelling. Central to the ITC model is the instructor’s awareness of their own place in the cultural landscape of the classroom and their ability to encourage reflection among students about their place and impact in the world.

## ITC as a Framework for Reflection

The ITC model is a tool for instructor reflection that allows faculty to (1) recognize ways in which they already model intercultural competence in the classroom, (2) identify areas in which they may need to continue to develop their skills, and (3) discover new facilitation strategies that they may add to their teaching approaches. The model may serve as a framework for long term teaching development or instructors may choose one or two new areas to focus on each year as they work to enhance their teaching practice.

*For a detailed description of the framework, see:*

Dimitrov, N. & Haque, A. (2016). *Intercultural Teaching Competence: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Instructor Reflection*. *Intercultural Education. Special Issue: Learning at Intercultural Intersections*. 27(5). 437-456.

Dimitrov, N. & Haque, A. (2016). *Intercultural Teaching Competence in the Disciplines*. In Pérez, G. M. G. & Rojas-Primus, C. (Eds.) *Promoting Intercultural Communication Competencies in Higher Education*. (pp. 89-119). IGI Global: Hershey, PA.



## Foundational competencies

This set of competencies refers to an instructor's own intercultural awareness and ability to model intercultural competencies for their students. Interculturally competent instructors are able to:

- 1.** *Develop an awareness of one's own cultural and disciplinary identities.*
- 2.** *Anticipate and accept differences among learners and ways of learning.*
- 3.** *Model and encourage perspective taking in the classroom.*
- 4.** *Model and encourage non-judgmental approaches to discussing cultural, social, or other types of difference.*
- 5.** *Model tolerance for ambiguity and help learners deal with the uncertainty involved in exploring difference.*



## Facilitation competencies

Facilitation competencies encompass the instructional skills required to recognize learners' needs, build community in the classroom, create shared academic expectations, as well as the ability to facilitate active learning with diverse audiences. Within this category, interculturally competent instructors are able to:

- 6.** *Facilitate discussion among students with a variety of communication styles.*
- 7.** *Provide feedback across cultures in a variety of ways.*
- 8.** *Tailor messages to audiences with different levels of linguistic ability.*
- 9.** *Recognize the barriers students may face to participation.*
- 10.** *Identify risk factors for learners that might surface during classroom activities.*
- 11.** *Create opportunities for peer learning and interaction among diverse learners.*
- 12.** *Build and navigate relationships with students who have different perceptions of power distance.*
- 13.** *Articulate and mediate differences in the roles of teachers and learners across cultures.*
- 14.** *Mentor students during their transition to new cultures and new disciplines.*
- 15.** *Articulate the meaning of academic integrity in their respective disciplines.*



## Curriculum design competencies

Curriculum design competencies include the ability to create alignment across the curriculum between learning activities and assessments in order to help students achieve global learning outcomes. Effective instructors are able to critically evaluate the curriculum and create learning materials that transcend the limitations of mono-cultural disciplinary paradigms, scaffold student learning so students have a chance to master intercultural skills relevant to their discipline, and design assessments that allow students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways. Intercultural competence in curriculum design includes the ability to:

- 16.** *Include learning outcomes related to intercultural, global or cosmopolitan learning at the course and curricular levels.*
- 17.** *Incorporate content in courses that represents diverse perspectives, paradigms, or disciplinary approaches.*
- 18.** *Create learning activities that allow students to explore difference and practice perspective-taking.*
- 19.** *Design assessments that recognize and validate cultural differences in writing and communication styles.*
- 20.** *Provide opportunities for students to reflect on and gain a better understanding of their own multiple cultural, personal and disciplinary identities.*