

## INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS CHECKLIST

### Introduction and Overview:

This checklist was compiled by the students working with the Teaching & Learning Centre in the summer of 2021 who were supported by a generous donation from the Peacock Family Foundation with the intent to foster diverse and inclusive classrooms.

Our main focus in creating this checklist was to recognize the Eurocentric nature of our university pedagogies and to consider ways to which we could address other ways of knowing and learning. As such, there are suggestions made related to Indigenization, decolonization, and cultural diversity, as well as potential accommodations for students with diverse abilities and learning styles. There are also suggestions related to student engagement and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning.

The ultimate goal is to create a learning environment at StFX in which students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and levels of ability thrive.

We emphasize that creating diverse and inclusive classrooms involves more than simply 'checking off' items on a 'to do' list. As such, we encourage deep personal reflection as well as personal/professional development in this regard.

### Possible Easy Changes

1. Include in your course outline some or all of the "Supplemental Statements" shared in the link below and in particular the Statement on Equitable Learning highlighting the contact information for the Human Rights and Equity Advisor, Megan Fogarty ([mfogarty@stfx.ca](mailto:mfogarty@stfx.ca)), the statement on requesting an accommodation such as the Tramble room, and this link of available resources for students (this includes many links for mental health resources) <https://www.mystfx.ca/health-and-counselling/resources>
2. Recognize the challenges associated with mental health and mental illness when introducing the link for the Mental Health resources provided at StFX stated above. Offer your support for students who are navigating mental health issues while completing their post-secondary education. Examples of this support are due date extensions, directing students to the appropriate resources, and talking with them regarding academic stress.
3. Recognize religious holidays from different belief systems (Catholicism, Protestantism, Anglicanism, Indigenous worldviews, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, etc). in your outline. Aim to not schedule important assignments, presentations, and examinations on days when important holidays are celebrated.
4. Sharing names and pronouns. As instructors we want to highlight and identify the different pronouns that exist (she/her, he/him, they/them). You might include the importance of using the correct pronouns and why you will use them in your course. Encourage students to introduce themselves with their pronouns, especially early in the semester. Reinforce this practice throughout the term.
5. Include a statement for students who experience financial distress. This could help students who face difficulty to feel more comfortable sharing with you their needs. It will facilitate the process of helping them get some of the academic resources they need (textbooks, calculators, pens,

notebooks), or even direct them to places where they can get some of their basic needs met (for example, the Student Food Resource Centre).

6. Reinforce the importance of an equitable learning environment throughout the term in which everyone collaborates to prevent the marginalization of certain students and reduce the potential for bullying. Acknowledge that the aim is for ALL students to feel welcome and included in your course.
7. You might consider the addition of supporting statements around 'Email Tips' & 'Office Hour Tips' in your course outline.
8. Increase transparency on your decision to have your office hours distributed in a specific way. Explain the difference between what could be communicated via email, and what you as a person would rather have the students talk about with you in your office. Clear up any misconceptions about Office Hours, and clearly explain your schedule for Office Hours as well as your timeline for responding to emails.
9. Emphasize the availability of the Student Success Centre for students to use as a resource for their written assignments.
10. Use a pre-course survey to get to know your students - their reasons for taking the course, potential career aspirations, what they wish to get out of the course, mediums they enjoy learning from (text, audio, visual, art, etc)
11. In your introduction, include different aspects of your personality (academically/on-campus as well as off-campus). State why you love teaching this class, the story of your classroom. Include initiatives you are currently a part of along with workshops you have taken/ research you are doing. This way, your students get to know your whole self, not only your "professor" self.
12. Increase student engagement and collaboration with each other through "getting to know you" activities during the first week of classes. Team building and Ice breaker activities are a great place to start.
13. Define what your expectations are in terms of class participation, class group work, learning environment etc. Clearly define visual or verbal examples of expectations in which you display the qualities/ practices expected from students.
14. Share with your students some of the changes and efforts that are being made to foster inclusion. Encourage feedback and collaboration to create this learning environment. Share the values and attitudes that would be expected and appreciated from them.
15. Try to provide space within your course outline and classroom for 2SLGBTQIA+/queer and the trans community. It is a great way to show openness and support to the community.
16. Include research papers, articles, and course materials by authors from diverse backgrounds (e.g. ethnic minorities, women in the sciences, scientists with queer identities).
17. Show students, particularly international students, how to use the "Canadian English" feature on Microsoft Word and other writing programs on their computers.

## Possible Moderate Changes

1. Include land acknowledgements at the beginning of the course, and most of the classes. Acknowledge that St. Francis Xavier University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People, which is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" between 1725 and 1779, in which cooperation and end of hostilities between the British crown and the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet people were acknowledged, but land or resources were never ceded.
2. Think critically about your course objectives. Are there 3-5 specific statements that encompass the objectives of the whole course. We suggest at least one (if not more than one) objective that tackles marginalized groups/ hidden oppression within your course. The aim is for students to think critically, develop analytical skills, and aim to reduce or prevent marginalizing behaviours through your course's lens
3. Break down large assignment into smaller low stake assignments. This provides and encourages formative feedback (where learning is re-assessed over time) and can adjust based on learning from their misconceptions. Small stake assignments early in the semester can be beneficial for students to gain a sense of the type of work you expect as the professor.
4. Creating awareness and space for your students to share what might be going on in their life, i.e., part time work, caring for family, financial trouble, food insecurity, illness, mental health. Encourage students to share this information with you in a space they feel safe. Reassurance that you will work closely with the individual to accommodate around course material.
5. Create classroom expectations and community guidelines within the first class. Possibly creating these together as a class allows students to have autonomy over their learning and a sense of themselves in their everyday classroom environment with you.
6. Foster respect and understanding for diverse cultures by providing materials that help students develop positive attitudes toward different racial and ethnic groups, people who speak different languages, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and people with different ability levels. (This can be done by actively using examples that represent different groups).
7. In your teaching, utilize images that highlight non-white, nonbinary, disabled, or plus-size people in relatable, empowered situations. Diverse, openly licensed image libraries, such as [Images of Empowerment](#) and [Disabled and Here](#), offer a range of images that instructors can integrate into learning materials to make them more responsive to students' realities.
8. When students are assigned group work, listen to students' feedback about their group placement. In the case that a student presents a reasonable complaint in terms of unfairness or any type of discrimination, be sure to address the situation and change their group.
9. Look to feature experts/researchers and images of individuals that come from diverse backgrounds and or fall into the category of underrepresented minorities. Highlight the work they are doing in the field. Make a big deal out of the success of those that are underrepresented
10. Use the backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, and diversity of the student in the classroom as a teaching tool. Bring their interests and passions into the material you teach. This is off the back of building relationships and knowing your students early in the semester

11. In a class with a limited number of women, acknowledge this phenomenon and try to represent women in your textbooks and other material. Remain vigilant of instances of gender-based discrimination among classmates and know how to call students out when you notice this behaviour.
12. Examine the kinds of reading assigned to students for a course, from both books and journals, that reflect diverse points of a given topic or issue. Question whose perspective is being shared. From what point of view is this piece written. Who is oppressed or forgotten in this work?
13. Include quotes, news articles, motivational pieces from individuals with diverse backgrounds and consider including a brief description of them along with a photo (i.e. Philip Kotler, Father of Modern Marketing, American author, consultant, and professor). Highlight success in the field of study from diverse people.
14. When discussing inequalities, make sure to include different types of inequality such as gender-based inequality, race-based inequality and/or 2SLGBTQIA+ inequality. It is important here to express the difference. Although a difficult topic to introduce it is very powerful.
15. Include scenario-based assignments, in which students can work to better understand the difficulties that marginalized/special populations face when trying to access different services. Your assignments might even challenge the students to consider how they will react to similar situations when they are professionals.
16. Present knowledge both specific to the discipline, and the way it is related to important sociocultural aspects (an example would be bringing up social determinants of health in a healthcare discipline).
17. Aim to have a reserve of a few items of material with an extra cost that is required for the course (textbooks, lab coats, calculators) for students with financial constraints to borrow. Use discretion when lending the material to students. Alternatively, facilitate more affordable options such as encouraging students to buy used textbooks from older editions.

## Possible Hard Changes

1. Include content that reflects respect for Indigenous science knowledge, Western science knowledge, and multiple worldviews. This can be done through the education and implementation of Two-Eyed seeing as a perspective to evaluate the various area(s) covered by your course as well as a North American Indigenous (or another autochthonous culture from a different part of the world) view on the same topic/area.
2. Invite international faculty members, key researchers, advocates in your discipline, Coady Institute members as guest speakers or panellists to provide information to students about how your discipline is taught, delivered, accepted, problematic in other parts of the world. Open the platform for people to share where they come from and how they ended up passionate about the discipline
3. Consider creating an assignment that allows students to put their footprint on. This might involve creating a framework in which students develop a sense of autonomy over the medium in which they complete different assignments. For example, you can allow students to orally present their work rather than essay format. Can they share their learning through art or other visual representations. Other options include, class debates, PowerPoint presentations, video recordings, brochures/leaflets etc. It is important that these assignments have clear grading schemes and expectations, so students know what key aspects are being marked.
4. Be conscious about building relationships and enhancing connections with your students. Find what is relevant to your class and individuals. Build relationships that can support mini conversations, student's confidence, and class dialogue. This is a two-way street, allow students to get to know you this begins at the start of the semester.
5. When preparing class material try to be openminded to the different learning styles that may be in your classroom (visual, oral, logical, social, physical, auditory, solitary). You may look to include multiple styles into every class. Along the way ask for feedback from your class. What styles are working/not working. Examples of activities to engage students according to the diversity of learning styles (e.g., mini lecture, case study, scenario, question period, debate, role play, group work, problem solving, video, music, art etc.).

## Selected Resources (that support suggestions made above)

Cape Breton University. Institute for Integrative Science and Health (website).

<http://www.integrativescience.ca/Principles/>

This website includes some of the guiding principles for Integrative Science such as Two-eyed seeing, Trees holding hands, Exchanging stories, and Healing. Articles and Presentations, Media and Archives are also provided. Some of the presentations show ways in which to integrate indigenous knowledge across the different fields in the form of pdf.

Supporting LGBTQ+ Students

<https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/supporting-lgbtq-students>

This website highlights the importance of language, role models, curriculum content, critically examining the heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions of various disciplines, and tips for being a visible ally.

Positive Space training provided in September 2020 for Staff & Faculty at STFX. Great examples of Name and Pronouns, Community Agreement, Appropriate language, Definitions of language.

<https://www.mystfx.ca/sites/faculty-development/files/2021-05/Positive%20Space%20Training%20-%20Staff%20and%20Faculty.pdf>

<https://www.mystfx.ca/sites/faculty-development/files/2021-05/Faculty%20and%20Staff%20PST%20Script%20and%20Resources.pdf>

Cultural Competency vs Cultural Humility

<https://hogg.utexas.edu/3-things-to-know-cultural-humility>

<https://focus.psychiatryonline.org/doi/pdf/10.1176/appi.focus.20190041>

Both links look at Cultural Humility and the importance entering a relationship with another person with the intention of honoring their beliefs, customs, and values. Cultural humility entails an ongoing process of self-exploration and self-critique combined with a willingness to learn from others.

Bond. Canadian Bureau for International Education: Internationalization of the curriculum and classroom experience.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED549984.pdf>

This article explores some of the aspects of internationalization of the curricula, including the role of faculty in this process, and some approaches professors might take in their classes.

Microaggressions and micro-affirmations: Opportunities for learning and inclusion

<https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/microaggressions-and-micro-affirmations-0>

A common term in today's vernacular of diversity and inclusion is "microaggression." Used to describe a variety of behaviors, it can feel like a somewhat amorphous concept unless provided a specific. Identified on this website are various types of microaggressive behavior and suggestions on how such behaviors can be successfully navigated as learning opportunities for you and your students.

Health and Counselling Resources that can be shared in the course outline. Includes master list of health and wellness resources. <https://www.mystfx.ca/health-and-counselling/resources>

Applying Indigenizing Principles of Decolonizing methodologies in University Classrooms.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/cihe/2017-v47-n3-cihe03415/1043236ar/>

This article argues that institutions of higher learning need to move away from the myopic lens used to view education and implement Indigenizing strategies in order to counteract the systemic monopolization of knowledge and communication. Faculties of education are taking a leading role in Canadian universities by hiring Indigenous scholars and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing into teacher education courses