

As promised, the collation of learning activity responses you shared during the workshop activities:

**Activity 1: Introducing Ourselves**

In this activity, we worked with the first foundational competency in the ITC framework, which is to: ***Develop awareness of one's own cultural and disciplinary identities, and positionality in the classroom.*** This competency is about reflecting on how our values and expectations influence our interactions with others, and how cultural others may perceive us. At base, it's about knowing and being our authentic selves. This is important because self-awareness is essential to developing any other intercultural competencies.

We showed you a video clip of one good way a Royal Roads instructor has introduced disciplinary identity and positionality in a 3-minute time frame, and asked you to think about what relevant, appropriate identity information you might share in your own self-intro to students to give them a sense of who you are? And, to reflect on what themes emerged from your conversation.

***Participants' initial responses:***

"I don't share much personal information when teaching. I focus on setting a lighthearted tone and atmosphere of excitement about the course. I'm hesitant about over-sharing; I'd rather get into content. Focusing on the experience rather than the self feels better to me. [Yet] students do want to be invited into our experiences as they pertain to their interests and plans."

Noted theme: "the relationship between identity and professional role...usually people identify what they do for a living, not who they are or where they come from. Perhaps [this is] about establishing teacher credibility, [as well as] the purpose/audience, and comfort level with sharing about professional rather than the personal."

***Participant responses as the activity evolved:***

"I am a second generation Canadian [with roots] in Alberta, Australia, and the British Isles... I'm passionate about cross-cultural understanding/communication. I grew up in Mexico. I usually tell my online students that I'm a parent as most of them are... I'm Irish, living in Ottawa... I might add the fact that I'm originally from South Africa instead of having [students] sit and wonder."

"I think our introductions are contextual. We try to guess what others might be interested to know about us (or not) and that shapes what we say about ourselves... I like the idea of a story ... [like Jean Slick. who] narrates an experience-based approach to her learning in disaster management, probably something students would want to know for a high-stakes enviro... Context matters... First Nation and international students typically mention their cultural background so when I do too, it shows I don't take for granted my position as "the norm..." Do you think this is collectivist/individualist related? ... Possibly... Yes, Craig Storti [link] has short dialogues that tease a lot of norms. He notes North Americans identify more with what they do."

"Shared experiences; everyone tried to make a cultural connection; expressed passion for the job; showed an approachable human side; introduced the informality of Canadian teaching (first names, etc.); tried to make students feel comfortable; and adjusted language for international students. Themes: "Common humanity, equal dignity, appropriate, relevant, personal story."

### Activity 2: Building Relationships

In this activity, we worked with two facilitation competencies: ***ITC#11: Create opportunities for peer learning and interaction among diverse learners. And, ITC#12: Build relationships with students who belong to cultures different from your own (adapted)***. These are important because intercultural learning requires direct experience of ‘others’ to develop interpersonal skills, like listening, empathy, and flexing communication norms. Book learning isn’t enough.

We asked you to think about relationship building with, and between, students, and offered some effective practice examples. We paused to remind that no one can ever be an intercultural expert, because ***there’s as much diversity within cultures as there is between them, and cultures are ever-transforming as time unfolds.***

#### ***Participants shared ideas that work well in practice:***

- Start with lower stakes activities / create new shared experiences, e.g.
  - Build in ice-breaker activities into the first session and try to participate, e.g. ‘find someone who... or ask for pet photos...Try to find commonalities within groups, e.g. why this program or how it fits my lifestyle.
  - Ask students to chat to each other, and then introduce themselves, or each other, or talk about their name.
  - Write down something we've been proud of doing in the last month and share it
  - Discuss a travel experience where you were surprised by a cultural difference.
  - Share a meal, or food, candies, humour.
  - Short video personal intros to start relationship-building by story-telling (e.g. FlipGrid). Yes, I start with mine!
  - Use the cultural iceberg metaphor to discuss what’s visible and invisible.
- Put myself on the same plane during introductions vs. standing above students who are seated.
- Start with a learning circle and invite Asma (Manager, Indigenous Student Services at RRU).
- Do one-to-one sessions with individual students before small group activities.
- Set up learning partnerships (e.g. groups of 3 provide feedback to each other).
- Encourage Joint note-taking coffee or tea sessions?
- Explore [www.liberatingstructures.com](http://www.liberatingstructures.com) for helpful facilitation strategies

#### **Cautions & Challenges Noted**

- Culturally, groups operate differently.
- Never make assumptions, give space, be careful with humour, and silence is ok.
- A student received feedback about “pushing culture” on other people (in a project proposal), so changed their topic – learning partnerships can be ineffective with culturally uninformed students.
- Some people may have privacy or safety concerns about sharing a personal video online, especially on the open net.

**Activity 3: Facing Barriers and Risks**

In this activity, we worked with another two closely related facilitation competencies: *ITC#9. Recognize the barriers students may face in participating in class activities. And ITC#10. Identify risk factors for learners that might surface during class activities.*

Our intention was for you to focus on **participatory activities**, like class discussions and team work, because they can be challenging for culturally diverse groups. In the moment, we gave you a *naïve learner task*, to try to identify key barriers and risks, without giving you definitions or examples from the literature. The key items were:

- Cultural self-segregation (preference to work only with home culture groups)
- Language proficiency issues (challenges in reading, speaking and/or writing in the local instructional language)
- Different cultural and social norms (challenge when norms are unknown, poorly understood, or conflict somehow)
- Fear of conflict or making mistakes
- Self-disclosure vulnerabilities
- Different academic preparation/expectations

Barriers and risks are interrelated and have a lot of overlap. However, one key difference is that barriers are usually seen as systemic / structural (more external) factors and risks as more subjectively experienced (intrapersonal).

Workshop participants noted that different norms can also be a strength because as everyone can learn much from diverse perspectives and viewpoints. In the literature on the international student experience, different cultural and social norms are seen as a communication barrier between international and domestic students when the norms are unknown or poorly understood across the groups, or if the norms conflict in some way.

We note some of you expressed confusion about this learning activity. Yet, we dare to ask you to reflect on how our diverse students may experience each of these issues, not even having a name for them, never mind a definition.

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to this conversation about intercultural understanding!