

Good Practice Principles in Practice: Teaching Across Cultures

Using the Good Practice Principles and Quick Guides

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Learning and Teaching Across Cultures

Using the Good Practice Principles and Quick Guides: Suggestions for University Managers and Leaders

This guide is for university leaders and managers. It provides guidance and suggestions on how to use the Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides to improve learning and teaching across cultures in faculties and strategically across a university. It supports the implementation of the Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides.

Cultural and linguistic diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception. Universities have a responsibility to cater to the learning needs of all students. Diversity in the classroom creates challenges and opportunities for teaching staff and students. In 2010 the Office for Learning and Teaching commissioned the International Education Association of Australia to develop a set of Good Practice Principles and supporting 'Quick Guides' to support the quality of teaching and learning across cultures in Australian Universities.

The Good Practice Principles, the Quick Guides and the suggestions for their use are evidence-based. They draw on current literature and on relevant findings from projects funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council from 2006-2012. You can find full summaries of these projects in the Good Practice Report Learning and Teaching Across Cultures available at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-good-practice-report-learning-and-teaching-across-cultures-2011>. The suggestions are also informed by discussions at a symposium attended by 80 participants from universities across Australia in May 2013. The symposium report is available from ieaa.org.au/ltac-symposium.

The Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides are available from ieaa.org.au/ltac.

The Good Practice Principles:

- Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will **focus on students as learners**
- Principle 2: Good teaching across cultures will **respect and adjust for diversity**
- Principle 3: Good teaching across cultures will **provide context-specific information and support**
- Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will **enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement**
- Principle 5: Good teaching across cultures will be **adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence**
- Principle 6: Good teaching across cultures will **prepare students for life in a globalised world**

One Quick Guide provides a detailed description of all six principles. See Good Practice Principles: Teaching Across Cultures, ieaa.org.au/ltac.

The Quick Guides

Seven Quick Guides discuss these principles in practice providing a list of ‘things to look for’ and guidance on implementation.

Quick Guides are available on the following topics:

- Assessment
- Curriculum Design
- Developing English Language Skills
- Managing Group Work
- Professional Development
- Student Services
- Teaching

Each Quick Guide focuses specifically on catering for cultural and linguistic diversity in that topic area. The guides may be used to audit and affirm current practice and/or to identify areas for additional effort or activity.

Using the Quick Guides Strategically: some recommendations and suggestions

The Good Practice Principles and the Quick Guides (hereinafter referred to as ‘Principles and Guides’) are resources designed to improve learning and teaching and will be most likely to achieve this function if they are introduced strategically, with careful support and institutional resources. Here are ideas about how you might introduce, use and support the adoption of the ideas and approaches outlined in the Quick Guides.

1. Support implementation of the Quick Guides

Learning and teaching across cultures is complex. The Principles and Guides can provide general guidance but will not be effective as stand-alone resources. While it might seem tempting to simply upload them to a website, this approach is unlikely to change practice. On the other hand, offering support and guidance to interpret what the Guides suggest and to enact them locally might. You could provide support and guidance by:

- organizing moderated discussion of different Guides at school and program level, perhaps as part of a scheduled or regular meeting
- including discussion of each principle in professional development workshops. Workshops could be departmental or university-wide although the latter offer the additional benefit of cross-disciplinary learning
- using events, discussions and interactions with staff to identify champions and leading teachers. Once spotted, you might support these people to build communities of practice on the theme of teaching across cultures.

2. Aim for small changes that have a big impact

Small changes to the way in which we teach and assess can have an impact that far exceeds the energy required to make them. The small but powerful changes can be difficult to identify, so help staff find them and to track and evaluate their effect(s). You could, for example:

- gather and disseminate examples of small changes that teachers have made. Make sure the accounts include evidence of impact on students’ learning
- record staff interviews describing changes and impacts
- record interviews with students from a range of different backgrounds talking about how small changes in teaching across cultures have had an impact on their learning.

3. Work within and across disciplines

Teaching staff are more likely to see the relevance of examples that are discipline and context specific. They can also learn from cross-disciplinary conversations around teaching. To foster intra-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary discussions, you might:

- draw staff attention to the way in which the Guides could be used to address a particular issue in a subject, unit or module they teach or coordinate
- encourage teachers in different disciplines to develop discipline-specific examples of each principle in practice (a 'third column'). For example, if the Guide on assessment suggests a certain strategy, then psychology teachers could show how this could operate or already operates in their discipline
- select a range of examples from the 'third column' idea described above, for dissemination across the university
- organise a mini-conference for the department or for the university as a whole at which staff showcase examples of the Principles and Guides in action.

4. Recognise and reward best practice

When practice finds a way into performance review and promotion, this sends a clear signal of what is valued by the institution. The Principles and the Guides can be used as a reference point for creating criteria for judging policies and practice. You could demonstrate value and reward good practice by:

- providing teaching awards related to each of the Guides and/or Principles
- using the Principles as the basis for the development of promotion criteria related to teaching
- including reference to the Principles in guidelines for peer review of teaching.

5. Engage all teaching staff

Teaching staff and students come from diverse backgrounds and have a variety of prior experiences, skills, knowledge and values. Both teachers and students need to be skilful navigators of teaching and learning across cultural boundaries. You encourage effective teaching and learning if you:

- incorporate discussion of the Principles and Guides in staff induction programs. Participants could be invited to share examples from their teaching
- ensure transnational partner staff and casual tutors have opportunities equivalent to those for tenured teaching staff to discuss good teaching and learning across cultures. For all, this needs to be part of ongoing professional development
- use the Principles and the Guides to inform policy and funding decisions, especially in relation to student services and staff development.

6. Link with other policies and priorities

There are many ways in which the Principles can be linked to institutional strategic goals and priorities. Linkage can help to minimize effort and maximize results across the institution. For example you could:

- tap into motivations to change curriculum such as improving retention and success rates
- connect the Principles with specific strategic priorities such as the development of graduate attributes and internationalisation
- connect the Principles with specific policy priorities such as assessment and moderation.