

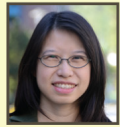
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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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## Centre for Teaching and Learning

**Tools  
For  
Excellence**

## Inclusive Classrooms

Ideally, every classroom would operate in a culture of respect where behaviors and beliefs incorporate mutual respect and responsibility. Your community of learners should share responsibilities and expectations within a safe, comfortable learning environment that is cooperative and friendly. For effective learning and academic success students and instructors need to feel respected and accepted. Students will want to participate and learn.

It is the instructor's initial responsibility to encourage and assist in the development and maintenance of a safe learning environment. Instructors can do this by making expectations explicit and also involving the students in creating those expectations or classroom norms. Maintaining a safe environment can then be a shared responsibility and enforced by both students and the instructor. It might be good to gather feedback midway through the term to see if students are feeling safe and uninhibited by equality issues.

### Tips in Creating a Positive Learning Environment

- listen carefully and convey a positive regard for the students
- model acceptance of different views
- don't be defensive if students challenge your views and concepts
- never humiliate a student, especially in front of the class
- avoid interacting with a student in a way that embarrasses, calls attention to or creates discomfort for the student
- avoid sarcasm and teasing- not all students will interpret this as humour
- never exhibit or comment on a student's work without permission
- treat your students as adults
- do not tolerate disparaging remarks based on gender, race, ability,

national origin or religion or racist or sexist behavior by students

- do not allow students to mock others for their responses to your questions or on their participation during discussions
- present material at a challenging level and pace that communicates respect for our students and their abilities

Inequality can occur in your classroom on the basis of characteristics which differentiate one student from another. Many traits that make us unique, such as (dis)ability, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or cultural beliefs, are invisible. Inequality and discrimination can come from you or from students and can be directed towards specific individuals in your class or members of a group with a certain characteristic. In British Columbia and at UBC Okanagan Campus, there are categories that are protected from discrimination. Everyone at UBC Okanagan Campus is protected on any of the following grounds: age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical or mental disability, place of origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or unrelated criminal conviction. To help build a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment, be attentive to when you ask people to speak to topics or issues. Encourage people to speak about their own experiences and not as representatives of their racial, ethnic, cultural, or another identified group.

For additional information, contact Human Rights & Equity Services at UBC Okanagan. [www.ubc.ca/okanagan/hes](http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/hes)

Terminology:

1. Sexism – allowing disparaging comments about one’s gender, spending more time with one gender, letting one gender monopolize the class time.

In order to correct this you should reflect and recognize the issue, seek training or feedback, introduce non-discriminatory materials for study, and update course information if required.

- Racism – when there is differentiated feedback and attention based on race and/or ethnicity or disparaging comments or jokes about groups are allowed or the white, western, male perspective is favored or you demonstrate impatience with students whose first language is not English.

3. Homophobia and transphobia – when there is differentiated feedback and attention based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, which can include harassing, prejudicial treatment of, or negative attitudes about lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transidentified, two-spirit, and/or intersex (LGBQTTI) persons. Behaviours can include making derogatory comments,

**The Centre for Teaching and Learning will be pleased to assist you further should you wish to explore this topic.**

innuendos, insults, or jokes about sexual orientation or sexual practice or forcing people to “come out” or to “stay in the closet”

Ableism – Practices and beliefs that assign inferior values to people with physical, emotional, developmental, or psychiatric disabilities. Providing differentiated feedback and attention based on actual or perceived disability, refusing to allow an accommodation request made by a student with a disability, or asking for further proof from a student with a disability who is registered with the Disability Resource Centre can create an unequal learning environment.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with learning disabilities, vision impairment, motor coordination difficulties or a hearing impairment may require scribes, copies of overheads and class notes, and special testing arrangements. UBC Okanagan has a Disabilities Resource Centre that coordinates arrangements with students who have identified their disabilities and applied for special status. You can contact them if you have any questions about the services that they can offer.

### **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES**

UBC has a policy on Religious Holidays (<http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy65.pdf>).

The list of UBC recognized religious holidays <http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/current/holidays.cfm?go=all> was created as an aid for the scheduling of examinations and other course work, to minimize conflict with students' religious beliefs and holidays. The holidays were selected based upon the guidelines that they require that the student (a) fast, (b) abstain from work or study, or (c) participate in all-day or fixed-time activities.

As with any type of belief, there are followers of each of these religions who are more strict and active in their involvement than others. Therefore, if an examination is planned for one of these days, it may not be a problem for the students in the class who follow the particular religion.

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/current/holidays.cfm>

## **Centre for Teaching and Learning**

The Centre for Teaching and Learning at UBC's Okanagan campus promotes and supports excellence in teaching and learning. The Centre provides campus-wide support for all models of teaching and learning, including online learning.

### **It is our Mission:**

*"To lead, support and promote teaching and learning excellence, innovation and scholarship at the UBC Okanagan campus."*