



## **The Development of Intercultural Competency (ICC): celebrating diversity in the classroom**

### **Key Words**

Intercultural Competency skills development

### **Abstract**

Intercultural Competency (ICC) is essential for 21st century learners. Effective interaction with people and career advancement incorporates more than just fluency in a language or culture. Specific skills are needed, such as innovation, higher-order cognitive skills, intercultural competence, and sophisticated communication and collaboration skills. It is the development of these skills which gives students the strategies and tools to connect globally and have the capacity to become global citizens. These intercultural skills are fundamental for success in the 21st century – within both the university and workplace environments. The preparation of graduates to be able to participate in workplaces across the globe is one of the primary aims of the Australian university sectors' goal of internationalisation, further highlighting the need to prepare students to perform in the global context. Students need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and values needed to embrace the opportunities and challenges they will encounter, and to create the kind of world that they want to live in. Research shows that just regular contact with other cultural groups does not lead to intercultural competence. The University of Adelaide's English Language Centre (ELC) has taken an innovative approach through the delivery of an ICC Program aimed at giving learners organised and structured opportunities to embrace diversity and inclusivity. Students develop their intercultural competence through focused and reflective activities aimed at developing skills needed to participate successfully in today's borderless world thus increasing their capabilities for future studies and employability. This ICC Program is now successfully embedded across all courses at the ELC and involves all our students, regardless of language level, working together with the aim of developing ICC skills. The program is designed to be easily implemented and transferrable to academic or non-academic groups and is not reliant on the cultures within the groups. Feedback and data is collected at specific points of the program through teacher and student evaluations and reflections. This has enabled us to continuously improve, adjust and modify as we progress. It has also allowed us to capture the student voice and gain a deeper understanding of their experience. The data has reinforced our objectives and demonstrates that students highly value the program. The presentation will demonstrate to the audience how the ICC Program creates meaningful opportunities for students to explore, connect and engage with other cultures, as well as their own. Our graduates now leave our centre with an education that has supported not only their language and skills development, but their development of Intercultural Competency skills. The presentation will show how it can be incorporated into programs as part of a transformative pedagogy for all students to enhance their future success and employability. The audience will learn how this is a 'fit for purpose' model that celebrates diversity in a transparent and meaningful way for students, teachers and management, while being aligned to University organisational goals, and how it could be easily adopted in other contexts (language centres/schools, training centres, primary/secondary/tertiary sectors).

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