

# Supporting Learning for Students from Diverse Ethnic, Cultural and Educational Backgrounds – session 3

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14<sup>th</sup> August 2020



# **Strategies for Encouraging Student Diversity within groups**

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# Some issues in group work I've encountered...

- Students ***prefer to work with others from similar cultural backgrounds*** to avoid cognitive tension;
  - ***Language barriers*** may pose a challenge to interaction and cause tension in groups;
  - ***Unfamiliar environment*** for international students that are in contrast to their own cultural learning scripts;
  - ***Different personalities*** may come in the way of group work;
  - ***Cultural stereotyping*** may have an adverse impact on student expectations and their academic motivation.
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# Students benefit from a diverse group environment...

Greater innovation  
and creativity

Benefit from  
effective conflict  
management

Facilitates  
interaction and  
learning



Opportunity to reflect  
on their strengths and  
weaknesses in groups

Adds a message of  
equality

Promotes cultural  
competence

***Diverse groups outperform homogenous groups (Summers and Volet, 2008)***

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# Some Suggestions for student wellbeing, collaboration and diversity...

- Break them into groups during or after the lectures.
  - Helps them get familiar with their group members
  - Problem-based learning
  - Refocuses the mind (Prince, 2004)

*Studies have shown that individuals working in groups has better solutions to problems when compared to individuals working competitively (Qin et al., 1995).*

- Choosing suitable group activities and not overly complex activities. Introduce activities that involve exchanging information on cross-cultural knowledge.
  - Intervene to address issues arising within the groups.
  - Set clear expectations and send frequent reminders/announcements to students.
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# References...

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