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

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Strategies for Encouraging Student Diversity within groups
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.
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)*
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.


