

# Bridging cultural differences in the classroom

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## Abstract

One of the many challenges for tertiary educators today is the increasing student diversity in Australian university classrooms with significant numbers of local and/or international students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Apart from issues of English language proficiency, different cultural understandings, values and expectations can have both advantages and disadvantages for both staff and students in the learning situation. A number of authors, including Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2000), Hall (1990), Hofstede (1991), and Abdullah & Shephard (2000), have attempted to delineate a number of cultural dimensions thought to underpin key behavioural patterns of people from different cultures. This presentation and workshop explores eight cultural dimensions and their manifestations in tertiary educational settings. The authors employ the MBI (Map-Bridge-Integrate) model of Distefano & Maznevski (2000) to enable lecturers to map and understand differences, build bridges, and integrate and devise useful strategies for bridging cultural differences in the classroom.

Participants will be actively engaged in small group discussion, with each group investigating a different cultural dimension and devising creative ways to bridge cross-cultural differences in understanding and behaviour at university. Lecturers will be provided with examples developed by the authors and encouraged to develop further strategies to suit their own lecturing styles and teaching situations. These activities can be easily adapted for use with students to enable them to interact and integrate more effectively in large and small group learning situations.

## References

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