



DECOLONISING GLOBAL HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT

A toolkit

V.1.0

MISSION

The IGH Decolonise Global Health Working Group seeks to address and prevent neocolonialism at UCL and in the field of global health and development by facilitating and promoting the use of justice driven, anti-racist approaches to thinking and discussing global health and development. We aim to transform the way the Institute for Global Health trains, supports and inspires future generations of global health practitioners by promoting educational inclusivity.

THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit was designed to provide tutors and teaching staff with concrete actionables informed by student feedback and our outcomes from departmental inclusivity health check from 2018-19, on the need to foster more inclusive learning environments. The toolkit is organised into three broad thematic areas:

1. **Accessibility:** the level at which course material and the learning environment are reachable, approachable, and traversable to all.
2. **Misrepresentation:** misaligned verbal and/or visual portrayals of people, groups, regions, and cultures—often stemming from stereotypes or bias.
3. **Language:** The expression of racism and/or exclusion through text and speech.

The suggestions in each area are founded on the principles of anti-racism, social justice, and decoloniality. We hope that through using this tool in guiding the revision of your curriculum, we can cohesively respond across the department to reduce othering behaviours, language, and practices that contribute to racism and exclusion in academia.

Each recommendation begins with a preliminary question to guide reflection on course content. Content refers to the body of your curriculum: lectures, readings, media, and lessons. To consider content through the toolkit's three underlying principles, think critically about the interaction of the material with students and systems—in other words, how do, for example, readings, symbolise, address, and/or promote systems of power such as colonialism?

Following content is praxis, which suggests how to promote institutional level changes in the classroom. This section is meant to challenge you to critically assess the underlying systematic forces that create the recommendation listed in content. Listed examples portray the adoption of said mindsets, and why they're beneficial.

This list is non-exhaustive and will be continuously updated. We advise you to use it in parallel with the following centralised [UCL guidance](#).

ACCESSIBILITY

Ask yourself...	Content	Praxis
<p>How do you ensure your lecture/classroom is a safe learning environment, open to critique and enquiry?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early on, encourage students to ask questions and contribute criticisms and perspectives in ways that best suit them. Also ensure that you have provided different mediums for collecting these enquiries such as over Moodle anonymously, or using a live online forum. 2. Explain why and how enquiry and critique is important in the classroom. 3. Ensure that tutorial leads are properly trained to open the floor to questions, addressing them, and encouraging/facilitating discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students come from diverse learning environments where the culture of asking questions or challenging concepts and ideas are not always permissive. Consider this when planning for your lectures and intentionally open the floor for questions, comments and concerns.
<p>Examples</p>	<p>Students in the past have hesitated to engage in the classroom due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preconceptions about classroom etiquette from previous educational experiences. - Discomfort from being misunderstood by tutorial leads and/or lecturer. - Uncertainty, nervousness, and pressure to perform. - Concern over ownership over ideas: students fear their ideas will be plagiarised by classmates. 	<p>Start the first lecture by explaining why enquiry is important in a global health classroom and why questions and comments are welcomed. Continuously provide and open spaces for discussions and questions throughout the course. Collaboratively establish ground rules and expectations for student engagement on the module.</p> <p>This will help unify your curriculum under common values and will help students understand how to learn in your classroom.</p> <p>Provide a number of access points for questions and enquiry—including anonymous methods such as online question and forum platforms either through Moodle or another method.</p> <p>This will provide non-confrontational opportunities for students to enquire if needed.</p>
<p>What steps have you taken to ensure students feel comfortable bringing their concerns to you, especially when the concern is about misrepresentation or exclusion?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be mindful of microaggressions** you may unintentionally be using. Students have expressed discomfort with lecture and/or tutorial leads who have misrepresented them—including microaggressions. <p>**Microaggressions are commonplace behaviours and actions rooted in bias that intentionally or unintentionally cause discomfort and/or offence. This includes verbal and environmental factors such as language or assumptions about capacity/skills/personalities/interests.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching and fixing microaggressions and micro aggressive behaviour is extremely important to promote educational accessibility because often, microaggressions create hesitancy in students to approach you about their questions and concerns with the material. • Do not become defensive—rather, be open-minded and practice cultural humility. Students have to feel safe to engage.

Examples

Behaviours such as using condescending tones with non-English speaking students or generalising terminology has been shared by students in feedback. In the past this has deterred students from engaging with lecturers, and generated feelings of being unsafe and/or discomfort in the classroom.

These behaviours can be identified through listening, personal thinking and education, and reading about student narratives at UCL and in IGH. Additionally, creating specific avenues and opportunities for feedback on microaggressions and safety in the classroom can help encourage all students to think about microaggressions in global health.

For more information on microaggressions and the related concept of implicit bias, see our Additional Resources section below for a link to an implicit bias test.

EVALUATING FOR ACCESSIBILITY:

- Be specific in your student evaluations:

- Ask students if they felt comfortable asking questions in class, if they felt heard and understood when asking questions and/or commenting on material, or if there are methods of engagement they would prefer seeing.

- Observe how students respond to you:

- Consider the profiles of students that engage during lecture, and those who don't. Assessing these patterns for might help you assess how well you have created a safe learning environment, and identify opportunities where you could improve.
- Be conscious of microaggressions, your language discussing topics such as race and colonialism, and how you respond to criticism.

MISREPRESENTATION:

Ask yourself...	Content...	Praxis...
<p>How does the content provided in your syllabus/programme portray low income communities and communities of colour?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid relying on images of people to portray your examples and/or research. Rather, include empowering or neutral imagery. 2. If you use imagery, ensure that the groups represented are balanced: where BIPOC** are not only represented as being helped, and non-BIPOC are not being represented only as individuals helping, or are in power. <p><i>**Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When planning lectures and presentations, consider the impact of the types of images you select. • By using images of individuals that are happy and engaged rather than sick or suffering, you are representing a more respectful image of that person and the issue you're trying to represent. This also combats the saviour narrative. • This ultimately avoids perpetuating symbolic violence against historically marginalized groups.
<p>Examples</p>	<p>Students have reported too many images of impoverished black children and frowning women in saris with children on their hip are used in global health to portray need/adversity.</p>	<p>Rather than showing a sick person in need of medication in the clinic, show images of medicine itself, or perhaps the clinic. If you want to show people, use pictures that you have been given the consent to use, and show empowerment—not saving. Ensure the individuals are clearly working with, not being worked on.</p> <p>If you need to exemplify the urgency of the situation, make sure your examples are consolidated in that example, warn the audience of the imagery, then explain your use of graphic imagery.</p> <p>Purposefully balance the narrative of need across your module – use examples from high and low income contexts; different cultures; of successes and failures.</p> <p>Create opportunities for students to share histories, cultures, and features that counter histories of those who have historically been disproportionately represented feel less targeted and tokenised.</p>
<p>To what extent have you ensured an intersectional and diverse set of narratives and imagery throughout your module?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand the breadth of your case studies and examples. Case studies and examples should come from all over the world to maintain a balanced representation of where and how global health is practiced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about why you choose them, how students might relate to them, and if these examples overrepresent an issue experienced in a region. • Incorporate authors in your reading lists, course materials, and guest speakers from all over the world.

<p>Examples</p>	<p>Painting South Asia as a hub for the oppression of women by overusing examples of GBV and IPV from the region.</p>	<p>Instead, diversify examples across different countries with different cultural and economic profiles rather than over-relying on case studies from countries historically identified as “The Global South”.</p> <p>By doing so, you provide a balanced portrayal of global health. You also provide students a wide range of regions and issues to think about, allowing them decide what interests them rather than informing that decision with an imbalanced narrative.</p>
<p>Be mindful about how concepts and ideas disproportionately portray agency and need in global health by either explaining and discussing or avoiding examples that promote subverted forms of othering.</p>		
<p>One emerging topic that exemplifies misrepresentative othering is reverse innovation. Reverse innovation describes a process where richer countries can mine technological and systematic advances and innovation from LMIC. It implies that innovation can only be unidirectional, through the term ‘reverse’.</p>		<p>This example feeds colonial othering by assuming that capacity for innovation and development is inherently different in LMIC and low-income countries, and that streams of innovation are unidirectional from poor to rich. Creating spaces to critique and problematise such terminology and concepts is important and can be done in all modules.</p>

EVALUATING FOR MISREPRESENTATION:

- **Be specific in your student evaluations:**
 - Ask students if they felt the examples were well balanced across the globe, and if there was a region they would have liked to see included.
 - Ask students if they felt the imagery was appropriate, or if they felt it misrepresented cultural groups or regions of the world. Ask them to be specific about when they felt this way.
- **Consider the ways you have represented various groups through your examples and take note of what you observed, if you changed anything, and why. Return to these notes after the module and assess them alongside student feedback.**

LANGUAGE

Ask yourself...	Content...	Praxis...
<p>To what extent has your module included generalising and othering language that asserts broad characteristics to diverse regions and peoples?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be as specific as you can to the country and ethnicities being discussed. If examples and papers use these terms, address it and provide opportunities for discussion that help academia move away from such generalising terms. 2. Explain why a change in terminology is important: touch on and/or open the classroom/tutorial session to discussion on terminology vs. semantics, and the role language plays in neo-colonialism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't use these terms, and each time you do, explain why. If you can't explain why, don't use the term. • Empower students how to think about why these terms are othering and problematic, and how to critically think about alternatives. This way, when confronted with these terms during their reading and practice in the field, they can still listen and learn, yet make and suggest their own replacements with informed background. • Create opportunities in your module to think about what is gained/loss in the use of these terms/divisions when exploring your specific topic.
<p>Examples</p>	<p>Avoid the use of "Africa", "Sub-Saharan Africa", "Third World".</p> <p>Using income group classifications such as high/low/LMIC in place of broader terms such as "developing"/"developed" countries will also ground terminology in more context.</p>	<p>Be specific.</p> <p>These regions are huge and extremely diverse. By generalising using the above terms, you not only reduce the cultures and communities to a singular narrative, you also make students from countries in Africa feel unheard and misrepresented.</p> <p>Don't teach generalised problem solving, and actively critique papers and organisational use of generalising language. Create space for discussion of these terms and why they're important in the type of skills your module is trying to teach.</p>
<p>How have you considered linguistic accessibility given the diversity in English language proficiency in GHD cohorts?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep live lectures and face-to-face sessions straightforward and simple in language. 2. Avoid unnecessary jargon, particularly in live lectures. If jargon is necessary, take a moment to explain the reason and meaning of the terminology/phraseology. 3. Diversify course material type: in addition to articles, include videos and podcasts to speak to different modes of learning and understanding—especially given the diversity in linguistic ability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While students attending UCL must attain a minimum TEOFL score, there are still differences in language familiarity. Teaching staff must be understanding of a diverse student body and be open and willing to act on change. • Posting slides early allows students in need of more time to process and prepare for lectures to excel. Students can use this advanced time to translate materials into languages they are comfortable with. This is in line with accessible teaching methods and guidelines.

Examples

Neoliberalism is frequently spoken about in class, yet students have expressed confusion when seeking to confidently define and identify it in their studies.

Consider providing a module-specific glossary defining terms frequent and relevant terms/terminology.

Ensure to define it briefly and give an example/describe how a given policy or ideology promotes (or not) neoliberalism.

The languages of IGH programs are varied, therefore modules must aim to teach the language of GHD as it sees fit to empower students to properly discuss and think about GHD.

EVALUATING FOR LANGUAGE:

- Be specific in your student evaluations:

- Ask students if they feel confident using and critiquing terminology common in GHD such as “developing country”, or “global south”.
- Ask students if language used in the course made them uncomfortable, and if so, which? Give them an example, such as “Africa”. Ask if they have any recommendations for a replacement.
- Ask if presentations clearly explored concepts, and if they feel empowered to use terms of the trade.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Implicit Bias Test

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

Examples of Microaggressions in the Classroom

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https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:gG51_dFNDQJ:https://www.messiah.edu/download/downloads/id/921/Microaggressions_in_the_Classroom.pdf+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=firefox-b-d

All Monuments Must Fall: A Syllabus

<https://monumentsmustfall.wordpress.com/>

UCL guidance on inclusive curriculums

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-strategy/1-personalising-student-support/bme-attainment-project/resources>

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