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Improving student belonging and inclusion with the Internationally Relevant Curriculum Scales

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Who we are

- Julia is a Lecturer in Academic Development
- Nighet is an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy Adviser
- Sam is a final year UG student in Psychology & Philosophy
- Yufan is a PhD student in the School of Health & Wellbeing
- Colette is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Maths & Stats
- Donald is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Biodiversity, One Health & Veterinary Medicine

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Decolonising the Curriculum & Internationalisation

- Ongoing calls to decolonise and internationalise curricula in UK Higher Education
- Key challenges: who is represented, who is heard, and who is expected to adapt
- Many institutional responses remain superficial and isolated (e.g., adding isolated global case studies or EDI-aligned policy language)
- Content substitution carried out by individual educators leaves student experience of the whole curriculum unchanged



2020-

1. Advance
HE/SFC
'Tackling
Racism on
Campus'

2. Advance
HE/SFC/QAA
'The Anti-Racist
Curriculum'
2021-

2021-

'Understanding
Racism and
Transforming
University
Cultures'

2024-

Scholarship of
Teaching and
Learning
'Internationally
Relevant
Curriculum
Scales'

From Content to Culture

IRCS allows us to move beyond symbolic “content substitution” and towards measurable change in curriculum culture.

- Focuses on **diversity** and **representation** in examples, readings and case studies.
- Surfaces how **power**, **voice** and **authority** are distributed in curricula and classrooms.
- Captures classroom **interactions**, **assessment** practices and student interest and engagement.
- Aligns directly with institutional **priorities** on inclusive learning, decolonising, internationalising, and closing awarding gaps.





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What is IRCS?

The Internationally Relevant Curriculum Scales (IRCS) is a developing quantitative tool ***that can turn decolonial and anti-racist principles into measurable aspects of the curriculum.***

It has been designed with our highly international student body in mind and has the potential to be scaled up institution-wide.



IRCS Briefing Notes



The IRCS Domains

We started with 39 Likert-scale items grouped into six domains that reflect key aspects of an internationally relevant curriculum, evidenced in the literature (Thomas and Quinlan 2024)

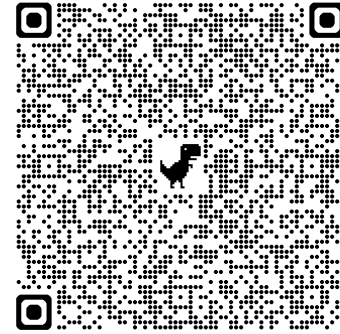
- **Diversity** (8 items): who and what is visible in the curriculum.
- **Representation** (6 items): how identities and communities are portrayed.
- **Power** (5 items): whose knowledge, perspectives and experiences are centred.
- **Classroom Interactions** (2 items): how students participate and are heard.
- **Assessment** (3 items): fairness, accessibility and cultural relevance of assessment.
- **Interest and Interactions** (15 items): engagement, relevance and peer interactions.



Validation

- Built on staff and student consultation, including detailed discussions on item phrasing and meaning.
- Ongoing validation with undergraduate students (n=27 qualitatively; n=105 quantitatively in this phase).
- Working with current course leads across our institution
- We are collecting data on student demographics – we want to identify (and evidence) any association between student demographics and the student experience.
- Where we are now based on complete responses...





How IRCS can be used in practice

IRCS is designed to sit within existing enhancement structures, not as a separate project.

- Deployed across selected programmes and courses to capture student experience of the curriculum.
- Data returned to programme teams and course leads with briefing notes and reflective prompts.
- Potential to be used alongside attainment data, student feedback and accreditation evidence in programme and course approval and review.
- Acts as a means of opening dialogue on international relevance and cultural inclusivity within programmes and between staff and students to foster student well-being and attainment.



References

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