

IRCS Briefing Notes for Lecturers

The Internationally Relevant Curriculum Scales (IRCS) offer a structured framework for evaluating the international relevance and cultural inclusivity of curricula in higher education. Building on the work by Quinlan and Thomas (2023; 2024), we developed IRCS to help educators assess student perceptions and guide curriculum revisions to improve engagement and reduce the awarding gap for international and racially minoritised students. This briefing document guides academic staff in administering the IRCS survey. Please read it carefully.

Key Components of IRCS

IRCS comprises 39 Likert-scale items (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree) across six dimensions:

1. **Diversity:** Assesses whether ethnically diverse perspectives and experiences are included in the course.
2. **Representation:** Evaluates how ethnic minorities are depicted, focusing on avoiding stereotypes.
3. **Power:** Measures encouragement of critical consciousness about systemic inequities.
4. **Classroom Interactions:** Gauges whether classroom dynamics foster equitable participation.
5. **Assessments:** Checks for culturally inclusive assessments.
6. **Interest and Interactions:** Measures student interest in the course and their engagement with staff and other students.

All 39 IRCS items are listed at the end of this document.

The survey finishes with a number of demographic questions which the project team will analyse in order to identify differences in perception among specific groups of students.

How to use IRCS

1. We would encourage staff to take the survey first to self-evaluate the international relevance and cultural inclusivity of a chosen course. While the first five dimensions are the same for students and staff, dimension six is omitted and the survey ends with tailored demographic questions for staff.
2. The second step is to conduct the survey with students. We recommend to set aside 15 minutes of class time to allow for the introduction of and participation in the survey. The briefing notes come with a 2-minute video created by students for students, and which explains the purpose of IRCS and how best to approach the survey items. We would advise to show this to students before they take the survey.
3. Upon request, the research team will provide staff with a report of the survey results relating to the selected course. Staff are also invited to schedule a meeting with the academic developer of the team to discuss potential changes to the course which would increase its international relevance and cultural inclusivity: Julia.Bohlmann@glasgow.ac.uk.

Thank you for using IRCS. We hope you find it a useful tool to assess your course and plan potential improvements.

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References

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Thomas, D. S. P., & Quinlan, K. M. (2023). Reimagining curricula: Effects of cultural (in)sensitivity of curricula on racially minoritised students' engagement. *Studies in Higher Education*, 48(2), 283–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2022.2134332>

IRCS Survey Questions Items

Diversity

1. The course includes people from diverse backgrounds, including their contributions and achievements in the field.
2. The course includes diverse examples from different countries and cultural contexts.
3. People from diverse ethnicities are part of my teaching team (lecturers, tutors, technicians)
4. People from diverse ethnicities are represented in course content, such as, lecture slides, reading lists, etc.
5. The course explicitly acknowledges and values different cultural approaches to understanding and problem-solving within the discipline.
6. The course addresses topics that are relevant to different ethnic communities within the UK.
7. The course addresses topics of international or global relevance.
8. The course includes and normalises diverse relationship structures in examples and case studies (such as family, professional or peer relationships etc).

Representation

9. The course avoids stereotyping people.
10. When discussing social problems, the course presents a balanced view and considers various perspectives.
11. The course avoids representing people from specific ethnicities as causing conflicts.
12. The course represents people from diverse ethnicities in leadership roles (for example, in the teaching materials, case studies and assessments used).
13. The course includes success stories of people from diverse ethnicities.
14. The course represents people from diverse ethnicities in terms of their strengths, talents and knowledge.

Power

15. The course's Intended Learning Outcomes explicitly address diverse cultural perspectives, histories and contexts.
16. The course raises critical questions about privileges that are usually taken for granted.
17. The course encourages students to critically evaluate power structures in society and challenge them in a constructive way.

18. The course encourages students to connect learning to culturally diverse social, political, or environmental concerns.
19. The course encourages students to take actions that promote equity.

Classroom interactions

20. My teacher proactively learns to pronounce everyone's name.
21. My teacher fosters an environment of respect for diverse perspectives.

Assessments

22. The assessments provide opportunities for students to reflect diverse cultural perspectives, histories, and contexts.
23. The assessments encourage students to connect the subject to diverse cultural experiences, perspectives, histories, and contexts.
24. The course offers diverse types of assessments (such as online quizzes, online assessments, invigilated exams, open books, presentations, group work, work-based learning, podcasts).

Interest and Interactions (for students only)

25. I am confident in the quality of the teaching on this course.
26. I am curious about the content of this course.
27. I am quite good in this course
28. I identify with this course.
29. I feel part of this course.
30. The course content is relevant to me.
31. The information from this course is important to my future.
32. Regularly I find myself thinking about ideas from this course when I'm doing other things.
33. My teacher is approachable.
34. My teacher is accessible.
35. My teacher is encouraging.
36. I communicate with my teacher during class time.
37. I communicate with my teacher outside of class time.
38. I communicate with students from the course during class time.
39. I communicate with other students from the course outside of class time.