



Increasing your local knowledge

## *Ethnic and Cultural Diversity*

Ethnic and cultural diversity encompasses the differences that exist between people, such as ethnic background, language, dress and traditions. Different attitudes and behaviours are often conditioned by culture and ethnic background - values, assumptions and perceptions that are instilled early on in life and are expressed in the way we behave and interact. These cultural influences are so deep that we act upon them instinctively, in everything we do, from the way we stand and talk, to the way we deal with superiors, conflict management and decision-making. Since these differences are so deep and intuitive, they can often lead to substantial misunderstanding and miscommunication. These notes will raise your cultural diversity awareness which will then enable you to communicate effectively with students from across cultures.

### **UNDERSTANDING ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

The population of Scotland is rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, and with many residents arriving from countries other than those with historical connections, this ethnic diversity will increase further in the coming years. These ethnic groups have a range of particular attitudes, experiences and values and academic organisations and you would benefit from developing ways to tailor services offered for those who belong to these groups.

When engaging with potential students from a minority ethnic group, you should be able to recognise the differences between the various groups, be aware of their own potential biases, accept different social and cultural beliefs and adapt your techniques and skills to the special characteristic of each of the diverse groups.

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS**

- Why is understanding local ethnic and cultural diversity important?
- How can you break down barriers? How can you eliminate or reduce discrimination?
- What measures can your organisation take to stimulate and enhance students from different ethnic backgrounds to access formal education?
- Describe several ways to understand diversity
- Describe ways to sustain a multicultural ethos in your organisation
- Describe new skills that will facilitate multiculturalism in your organisation
- Describe the ethnic and cultural diversity of your region
- Discuss relevance
- Discuss how these issues may influence the way you engage with students

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

- Local sources
- [NIACE cultural diversity](#)
- [Diversity and Integration](#)
- [Visit Scotland](#)