Decolonisation: Checklists and Action Plans

Decolonising our curriculum, art forms, and institutions is essential to our social justice and equity work. Decolonisation is an ongoing process and should not be reduced to simply adding or removing authors or course material. Decolonisation should start by asking who we are, what we value, why we value certain things, and what do we fear.

Based off a [WonkHE blog post published in April 2021](https://wonkhe.com/blogs/how-not-to-decolonise-your-curriculum/), the below resource have been developed to help CDD member schools think through there efforts to decolonise their curricula and themselves. It includes:

* A summary of dos and donts
* A self-reflective exercise
* A checklist to critically evaluate your courses
* A resource to help you review progress

# Dos and Don’ts

Before thinking about decolonisation, is it important to understand that decolonisation in an on-going process of change and reflection. Decolonisation is not a box ticking exercise or simply adding or removing content from courses. When working to decolonise your institution or course, bear the following dos and don’ts in mind:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| DO… | DON’T… |
| interrogate the current canon to explore who is included and who is missing. | just replace one set of sources or material with another. |
| present a broad range of contributors to the overall narrative of the history and/or theory of a subject discipline – tell as full a story as possible | be tokenistic and include diverse examples devoid of their context |
| embed this diversity into the subject content as a means of enrichment | make diversity an afterthought or add-on |

# Self-reflection: What to ask yourself when decolonisation

Decolonisation should take place within a variety of different context, from decolonising ourselves, to our disciplines, institutions, and students. When starting to think about decolonisation, it might be helpful to think through the following questions and how you might answer them.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date this form completed** |  | **Form completed by (name of staff member/group/committee):** |  |
| **Theme** | **Question** | | **Answers and Commentary** |
| **Ourselves** | What advantages or disadvantages have shaped our lives? | |  |
| Whose knowledge do we value? | |  |
| Whose perspectives have we ignored/dismissed? | |  |
| What do we fear? | |  |
| **Art form** | What does the art form stand for? | |  |
| Who is let in and who kept out? | |  |
| Who drops out? | |  |
| How has the art form it varied over time and space? | |  |
| Is there a restrictive, unchanging subject canon? | |  |
| What might alternative canons be? | |  |
| **Institution** | What does the institution stand for? | |  |
| What is let in, who is kept out, and who drops out? | |  |
| Who achieves and who scrapes by? | |  |
| What assumptions are made about students’ prior cultural capital, expectations, and potential? | |  |
| What assumptions are made about performance training traditions? | |  |
| Can these traditions be broken down and reinterrogated? | |  |
| **Students[[1]](#footnote-2)** | Who are our students and what is important to them? | |  |
| What are their interests, goals, values, and fears? | |  |
| Do they feel entitled to be training or do they feel they are imposters? | |  |
| **Curriculum** | What are our sources of knowledge? | |  |
| Are there other sources of knowledge? | |  |
| How can we reconceptualise course content to reflect wider global and historical perspectives? | |  |
| How can the curriculum be taught to enable student to independently evaluate and debate cultural norms and traditions? | |  |
| How can we work with our students to help them shape their own educational experiences? | |  |

# Checklist: Has my Curriculum Been Colonised?

The below checklist will help you determine what aspects of your curriculum have been decolonised. Space has been provided for you to reflect on these areas of potential colonisation and to note down possible actions that can be taken to decolonise.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date this form completed** |  | | | **Form completed by (name of staff member/group/committee):** |  | | |
| **Does the curriculum…** | **Yes** | **No** | **Commentary** | | **Action** | **Deadline** | **Progress on Action Review date** |
| **Centre on UK and ‘Britishness’ at the expense of other interpretations of the world?** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **Draw only on British or European perspectives in relation to the history and theory of the art form?** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **Omit to mention non-European cultures or groups, or else speak of them only in deficit, tokenistic or stereotypical terms, treating them as “exotica” or curiosities?** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **Claim a national monopoly on certain moral principles or values?** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **Fail to interrogate how issues of power, privilege and oppression have developed historically in relation to the subject area?** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **Assume that the “British” way of thinking within the subject discipline is universal, neutral, and value-free?** |  |  |  | |  |  |  |

# Review: How Far has my Curriculum been Decolonised?

Decolonisation is an ongoing process of reflection, action, and evaluation. The below table is intended to help you evaluate your progress against actions undertaken to decolonise your curriculum, the effectiveness of these actions, and to identify further actions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date this form completed** |  | | | **Form completed by (name of staff member/group/committee):** |  | | |
| **Does the curriculum STILL…** | **Yes** | **No** | **Actions undertaken** | **Commentary on implementation and success** | **Additional actions** | **Deadline** | **Progress on Action Review date** |
| **Centre on UK and ‘Britishness’ at the expense of other interpretations of the world?** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Draw only on British or European perspectives in relation to the history and theory of the art form?** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Omit to mention non-European cultures or groups, or else speak of them only in deficit, tokenistic or stereotypical terms, treating them as “exotica” or curiosities?** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Claim a national monopoly on certain moral principles or values?** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Fail to interrogate how issues of power, privilege and oppression have developed historically in relation to the subject area?** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Assume that the “British” way of thinking within the subject discipline is universal, neutral, and value-free?** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. It is important to remember that student are partners in decolonisation. It is important that this reflective exercise if done with them and not to them. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)