



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Competencies

INTRODUCTION

Promoting diversity, supporting equity, and cultivating inclusive practices are central aims of the International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT), as set out in the organization's [2021–2024 strategic plan](#). This position stems from a fundamental precept that every member should have the opportunity to fully participate in and benefit from the organization, regardless of background, identity, or personal circumstances. Equity is necessary to realize our strategic goals, and it is a critical part of our commitment to every member of IAYT.

IAYT's DEI Competencies aim to be the foundation for efforts to challenge and dismantle discrimination, systemic barriers, and ignorance in our organization. The focus of the work is to build new resources, cultivate compassion, amplify diverse member voices, develop community partnerships, and accelerate our progress toward improving the organization as a diverse, equitable, accessible, and inclusive community.

About the Framework

Competencies in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) provide a supportive framework to identify and work toward eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers, and bias in and from IAYT and to support all members. The framework requires that the board of directors and other volunteers, staff, individual members, member schools, community leaders, and prospective partners work together to create an organization in which every stakeholder feels a sense of belonging and can become personally successful, productive, and actively engaged in the work of DEI at IAYT.

IAYT, an international organization, recognizes that our diversity enriches and empowers us—the success of our members is an indicator of the success of our organization. We acknowledge that this belief and our ongoing improvements in the areas of DEI are themselves alone not enough to ensure equitable access and outcomes for all members. Access gaps continue to exist, and some members do not consistently feel included within the organization in a way that allows them to participate with pride in who they are. IAYT needs to be an organization that supports members—individuals, schools, and communities—so that they may share and learn about diversity and experience it.

Background

A goal of the DEI Competencies is to ensure that members, staff, board and other volunteers, and community partners foster a sense of belonging and appreciation for each individual as they are.

IAYT has made progress toward creating a more inclusive and equitable environment with the development of a DEI Task Force, plans for a standing committee and expanded staff roles, Seva Award program, educational opportunities, conscious engagement, and partnerships with like-minded external organizations.

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(A brief history of this work is available [here](#).) The organization continues to grow and seeks to better understand a range of DEI issues, realizing that further action is required. This work includes but is not limited to identifying and working toward eliminating systemic barriers, biases, power structures, and dynamics that contribute to inequities. Such dismantling is also an opportunity for learning, growing, and supporting meaningful contributions to yoga therapy.

The members of IAYT are at the heart of everything the organization undertakes. The inclusive and equitable culture that IAYT continues to promote relies on a membership that is diverse in all perspectives.¹ In turn, successful service to our members fundamentally relies on inclusion and diversity to promote our core values of respect, inclusion, balance, sustainability, and leadership.² Each member brings a distinct background, experience, and perspective on yoga philosophy. We are a stronger organization because we leverage DEI in how we interact in all situations.

IAYT acknowledges the need to develop DEI competencies like those outlined here, to build an action plan to advance DEI initiatives, to cultivate collaborations with organizations that serve historically underserved communities, to provide opportunities to educate its membership on sound practices related to anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices, to cultivate intercultural and cross-cultural organizational relationships, and to support members in envisioning themselves as innovators and participants of social change in yoga therapy across the globe. We affirm that this work will be ongoing.

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We continually endeavor to approach all of the work we do through a lens of

1. cultural competence,
2. understanding microaggressions,
3. understanding implicit bias,
4. cultivating compassion, and
5. deliberately leveraging organizational learning.

1. Cultural Competence

Put simply, cultural competence is the ability to understand, accept, and interact with individuals of different backgrounds and cultures. Cultural competence incorporates communication, action, beliefs, thoughts, and values diversity of ethnicity, ethnic background, and religious beliefs, as well as an appreciation of social values; it is action-oriented toward generating changes and learning.³ Cross-cultural attitude strategies that include communicating with respect and recognizing others' values⁴ will help us to develop and enhance our ability to practice effective communication in intercultural situations.⁵

As an organization, IAYT will

- practice openness, demonstrating acceptance of difference (*subkha*);
- be flexible, demonstrating acceptance of ambiguity;
- demonstrate humility by suspending judgment and being open to learning (*amanitvam* and *namrata*);
- be sensitive to others, appreciating cultural differences;
- have a spirit of curiosity, seeing opportunities to learn in different situations (*jijnasa*);
- practice positive change or action, demonstrating successful interactions (*karma*);
- commit to continuous learning and growing (*bhavanatha*); and
- embody compassion, empathy, and loving kindness (*karuna* and *maitri*).

These strategies will guide us in developing cultural competence. As an international organization, IAYT interacts and has relationships with diverse people and groups. Developing personal cultural competence is required so that our members feel valued and understood. This competency represents a commitment to *svadhyaya*, self-study, to avoid *asmita*, the false identification that can also include cultural appropriation/misappropriation.

LEARN MORE: CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cultural competence is an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures, particularly in human resources (HR) settings, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies whose employees work with people from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Cultural competence has four components:

1. Awareness of one's own cultural worldview
2. A welcoming attitude toward cultural differences
3. Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews
4. Cross-cultural skills

Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.⁶

Cross-cultural competence is a concept that recognizes and appreciates differences in backgrounds, including ethnicities, regions, and nations. It also includes valuing effective interactions. Cross-cultural communication, attitudes, and behaviors embrace and appreciate cultural differences.

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Attributes of cultural competence include

- self-knowledge and awareness about one's own culture,
- awareness of one's own cultural worldview,
- experience and knowledge of different cultural practices,
- a welcoming attitude toward cultural difference, and
- acknowledgment of source cultures.

LEARN MORE: MICROAGGRESSIONS AND MICROINEQUITIES⁸

- **Microassaults** intend to cause harm by excluding or demeaning someone else.
- **Microinsults** repeat attitudes that demean another person's background.
- **Microinvalidations** are comments or actions that dismiss someone's thoughts, feelings, or experiences.

In contrast to microaggressions and the micro (and macro) inequities that may result, **microaffirmations** substitute messages about deficit and exclusion with messages of excellence, openness, and opportunity. Microaffirmations involve

- active listening,
- recognizing and validating experiences, and
- affirming emotional reactions.

2. Understanding Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults—whether intentional or unintentional—that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely on their membership in a marginalized group.⁷ Microaggressions can be related to many intersecting aspects of identity.

Microaggressions are acts of violence, and yoga encourages us to commit to nonviolence (*ahimsa*). Understanding microaggressions transcends intellectual knowledge and encourages us, as individuals and a community, to respond to such noninclusive behaviors and acts of violence.

3. Understanding Implicit Bias

Implicit bias⁹ refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. It is a form of *avidya*. These biases can be both favorable and unfavorable assessments and are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Addressing implicit and unconscious bias requires

- knowing how to participate in a difficult conversation,
- doing our own work,
- reimagining equity and access, and
- critical practices for anti-bias education.

4. Cultivating Compassion

Cultivating compassion, karuna, includes self-compassion, which involves caring for and celebrating one's identity, needs, and beliefs. This care and celebration must be done in a way that does not degrade someone else's identity, needs, or beliefs in the process. This competency recognizes that disagreements may occur, but they need not include disrespect. Cultivating compassion emphasizes the fundamental importance of finding common ground to engage in courageous conversations.

Compassion-based communication encourages us to remain present and engaged, even with those with whom we have disagreements, in a way that acknowledges everyone's voice and so that no one feels silenced or ignored. By cultivating compassion in our attention, thinking, feeling, and behavior we learn to grow as a community.

5. Deliberately Leveraging Organizational Learning

The concept of organizational learning recognizes that the way in which learning about DEI takes place is affected by the context of the organization and its culture. Organizations do not perform the actions that produce learning. Rather, board members and other volunteers, staff, and individual members of the organization behave in ways that lead to organizational learning, although organizations can create the conditions that allow such learning to occur.

IAYT promotes fair treatment and accessibility for all of its stakeholders. Our inclusive workplace environment is built on mutual trust, respect, and dignity and incorporates DEI in its daily work. We pledge to identify and eliminate barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace.

Yoga therapy is a growing field, and we recognize that we must invest in education and training that integrate DEI competencies and learning to build a socially and culturally responsible field.

LEARN MORE: COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

A **courageous conversation** is considered a discussion that is difficult and uncomfortable because of the emotions involved on both sides. Although these conversations can be challenging, awkward, or stressful, they are important and necessary. Such discussions facilitate growth and often deepen understandings to build relationships. According to Glenn Singleton, founder of the organization Courageous Conversation, these conversations also provide a framework for the transformation of systemic racial equity.

UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTING THE DEI COMPETENCIES

IAYT's Commitments

IAYT is committed to fair and ethical interaction with our members, partners, stakeholders, and the public, and we endeavor to

- build meaningful community partnerships,
- share information and best practices, and
- identify actions and strategies that can transcend traditional divisions.

We are on a path to continue exploring how to build DEI into all of our efforts and to model these values as we advance our mission of establishing yoga as a recognized and respected therapy. Our actions are intentional as we make space for positive outcomes and for members to feel a sense of belonging. We will continue to engage in and revisit honest dialogue among the board of directors, committees, and other volunteers; staff; and members to examine internal biases and adopt practices that promote equity and explore how this work can be advanced throughout the yoga therapy profession.

- We will support consistency in desired outcomes by strengthening policies and procedures, using accessible technology, and enhancing training and education.
- We will foster an environment without barriers to opportunity, where all members, volunteers, and staff feel welcomed, valued, respected, and engaged and can effectively participate and share their unique talents, skills, and perspectives.¹⁰
- We will identify barriers that underserved communities and individuals may face with regard to access to opportunities for yoga therapy education and training as students, facilitators, and educators.
- We will include diverse perspectives and learning opportunities connected to DEI to support learning, achieve goals, and prevent unintended miscommunication.

In its broadest sense, diversity includes seen and unseen qualities and acknowledges that life experiences make individuals unique. Achieving DEI is a fundamental part of IAYT's mission and is important to serving our membership. DEI is not separate from the organization's operations, and as we are working to grow IAYT's infrastructure we are continuing to commit to evolution of the DEI Competencies and their incorporation across the organization. We are working to achieve demonstrated benefits of DEI and the implementation of DEI competencies, which include

- enhanced creativity,
- better and more productive communications,
- faster problem solving, and
- enhanced programs and services for members.

The commitment represented by this document is a crucial step. Educating ourselves about how deep the commitment must be over time is a big hurdle. The work will be continuous, and it will not be linear; there is no beginning or end, and no checklist to follow. Periods of discomfort will be necessary to achieve equity for all—a healthy, whole IAYT community.

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DEI Competencies

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles for developing IAYT's DEI Competencies cultivate an inclusive organization that supports members to grow and thrive.

1. **Commitment to long-term sustained action:** The development of inclusive organizations takes time and commitment. The work to build an inclusive organization requires ongoing effort and learning rooted in real experiences. This commitment also recognizes that every member has the capacity to contribute to IAYT's overall goals and objectives.
2. **Relationship between individuals and their environment and contexts:** This relationship cannot be separated because they are interconnected. An inclusive organizational environment recognizes that individuals have a dynamic relationship in a range of contexts, including individual members; committees, board, and other volunteers; staff; and the organization's structures and policies. Although individuals have different, unique abilities and capacities, in an inclusive environment everyone's strengths and contributions are encouraged, supported, and leveraged.
3. **Engaging in the journey toward greater DEI:** This work is not a series of checkpoints, nor does it have a final destination. All of the individuals, teams, and structures, as well as the organization as a whole, are moving along a continuum.
4. **Unity in diversity:** Embracing DEI in the organization empowers individuals and the community to thrive. Fairness and equity are needed to achieve unity. Without fairness, diversity is channeled toward the goal of uniformity rather than unity of purpose, vision, and coordinated effort. We must acknowledge that equity is not the same as equality and remain focused on embracing equity, which explicitly recognizes and works to address the different barriers faced by different individual and groups.

Spheres of Influence

The DEI Competencies described above may be implemented within three spheres of influence. They are actualized within (1) each of us individually; (2) the board and other volunteers as well as the staff; and (3) each member of IAYT, the IAYT community.

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Spheres of Influence

Internal (Self)	Operational (Staff; Board, Committees, & Other Volunteers)	External (Membership & Community)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit to self-study to assess awareness of DEI• Engage in learning opportunities• Advocate for the inclusion of diverse perspectives• Be responsive and respectful• Commit to ongoing anti-oppressive learning opportunities• Ask for support and seek guidance• Implement accommodations to meet the diverse needs of clients and students in my professional practices• Be accountable for my actions and inactions• Admit wrongdoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultivate working relationships based on inclusive practices• Engage with diverse teams to work toward strategic outcomes• Equitably manage courageous conversations and potential conflicts• Support DEI learning and development of all team members• Assess performance and capabilities in an inclusive way that honors diversity and equity• Encourage continued growth and education• Respond to team needs through an equity and anti-oppressive lens• Evaluate existing practices through a DEI framework and commit to improvements• Be accountable for actions and inactions• Celebrate and amplify anti-oppression work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and encourage inclusion in the organization and community• Promote and foster healthy relationships• Develop an awareness of DEI best practices• Measure engagement through a DEI framework• Identify and respond to oppressive behaviors• Hold one another accountable for noninclusive behavior• Collaborate to present a platform for DEI learning• Contribute to DEI efforts• Engage in courageous conversations and learning opportunities• Elevate diverse voices• Acknowledge source culture• Provide compensation for DEI work

Adapted from Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council.¹¹

Application of Competencies

IAYT's DEI Competencies serve as guidelines with different values for each user—the board and other volunteers, staff, and members will each find slightly different value from the competencies to support their needs. These competencies are an invitation to engage in collaboration, communication, and an exploration of their applications individually and collectively.

Some examples of where the competencies can be applied include

- committee and job descriptions;
- training needs assessments;

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- DEI planning and monitoring;
- policy development;
- informing continued professional development;
- recruitment;
- community-development initiatives;
- learning objectives for educational programs; and
- assessment criteria for workplaces, programs, and initiatives.

These competencies are not meant to be a checklist. They are an acknowledgment that DEI affects most aspects of personal and professional lives as well as the operations of IAYT. The qualities described are intended to complement existing personal, organizational, and business competencies. We acknowledge that progress around DEI is occurring in a diverse range in our communities. Some stakeholders may wish to add some of these competencies to their work, whereas others may already be immersed in their own DEI work and have their own competencies. In the latter case, the IAYT DEI Competencies may be a supplement.

The DEI Competencies were developed and expressed in an open way so that they may be of value throughout the yoga therapy community. The competencies may be leveraged to foster the needs of individuals and teams across IAYT to promote and improve DEI and anti-oppressive efforts such as recognizing and acknowledging power and privilege while committing to working toward dismantling systemic barriers within the organization and the field. The competencies also provide a mechanism for accountability and monitoring the progress of incorporating DEI practices across the organization.

Performance Criteria: Demonstrating Progression

As individuals, teams, and initiatives begin to use the DEI Competencies, it is important to remember that the expectations of progression pathways for their implementation may vary. The aim is to improve practice and proficiency in incorporating a DEI lens and managing more complex DEI issues. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that each person or team's progression path will differ according to their situation and the learning opportunities available, and to maintain flexibility with how the competencies are implemented by various stakeholders in different initiatives. Although the same competencies may be used to reflect on any initiative or role, the expectations (or requirements) and level of proficiency would be different. For example, a committee member's level of proficiency with the competencies would likely differ from that of an experienced DEI or HR professional.

A typical progression with using the DEI Competencies may start by increasing proficiency with low-complexity situations, for example, attending introductory trainings and town halls. However, over time the competencies can be applied to more complex situations such as real-life or workplace situations in yoga therapy practice. As experience begins to increase, proficiency develops in tandem, perhaps to a place where the competencies are implemented regularly in yoga therapy practice and become a transferrable skill used in different roles within and outside the organization.

To measure users' implementation, a stage-based progression spectrum may be helpful. This tool supports collaboration and communication as each user/team develops specific competency application guidelines

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and measurements of progress for individual projects and stakeholders. Such a rubric also facilitates the communication of progress and implementation of the DEI Competencies across the organization.

Developmental Stage					
Ready	Understand	Respond	Perform	Coach & Support	Lead & Transform
Conscious incompetence and willingness to learn	Knowledge alone but not yet implemented; theory learned (though personal learning, conversations with mentors, attending courses)	Conceptual application; tentative performing First steps taken (e.g., identifying issues, adjustments in communication)	Perform confidently and/or routinely May begin to act with confidence by consistently putting into practice what has been learned	Sharing skills to help others gain this knowledge/skill Although not all will reach this stage, those in leadership roles in a project should aim to do so	Creative initiatives; change systems

The stages from “Ready” to “Perform” are where individuals, teams, and initiatives should aim to develop progress. This staging should also inform the design of the project/initiative because it should clarify what the project’s DEI objectives should be and influence the development of the individualized evaluation tool used. For example, a working group exploring the implementation of DEI in a presentation for yoga therapists can use the progression spectrum to identify where the audience/community are to begin with and create objectives to move attendees and the working group members further along the spectrum.

FURTHER LEARNING

DEI is an ongoing process that involves continuous learning. The terminology around diversity, equity, and inclusive practices continues to evolve, and we hope that you will consider the following resources, including the references that informed this document, in the spirit of ongoing self-study.

Glossary

Following is a basic glossary of terms and concepts to promote better understanding of equity and inclusion; the list is not exhaustive, but rather provides starting points for further learning.

ableism: refers to attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. Ableism can be conscious or unconscious and is embedded in institutions, systems, or the broader culture of a society.¹²

accessibility: the consideration of various barriers to full participation in teaching and learning activities. Accessible learning environments, for example, allow students with disabilities to “acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as students without disabilities, with substantially equivalent ease of use.”¹³ Components of accessibility could include accommodations for assignments, adjustments in physical space or with classroom technology, or providing alternative assessments.¹⁴

accommodation: making changes to rules, standards, policies, workplace cultures, and physical environments to ensure that they do not have a negative effect on a person because of the person’s mental or physical disability, religion, gender, or any other protected ground. Accommodation should be provided in the way that most respects the dignity of the person.¹⁵

accountability: in this context, any reasonable change in the work or school environment (or in the way things are usually done) to help a person with a disability apply for a job, perform the essential duties of a job, enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment, or pursue an education.⁶

ageism: discrimination based on age.

ally: a member of the dominant group in a society who acts against oppression.

anti-racism: an active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional, and systemic racism as well as the oppression and injustice racism causes.⁶

authentic self: who an individual is as a person, demonstrating different experiences, perspectives, cultures, history, etc., without being forced to conform to the majority culture. An organizational culture must value a range of talents, skills, and experiences to create a sense of belonging for everyone without causing harm to others.¹⁶

barrier: anything that prevents a person from fully taking part in all aspects of society, including physical, architectural, information or communications, attitudinal, economic, and technological barriers, as well as policies or practices.⁶

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bias: thought patterns/habits that can be conscious or unconscious. Conscious bias is prejudice—either for or against someone or something—of which one is aware. For a definition of unconscious bias, see **implicit bias**.

colorblind ideology: a belief that assumes institutional racism and discrimination have been largely eradicated, and that “equal opportunity, one’s qualifications, not one’s color or ethnicity, [is] the mechanism by which upward mobility is achieved.”¹⁷ This belief can lead to a dismissal of social and cultural factors still affecting many people of color, as well as a rejection of policies that attempt to address existing inequalities (e.g., affirmative action).¹⁸

courageous conversations: discussion that can be difficult and uncomfortable because of emotions on both sides. These conversations facilitate growth and often deepen understandings to build relationships. Courageous conversations are also a “framework for systemic racial equity transformation”¹⁹ to promote and support interracial dialogue.

critical reflection: examining one’s assumptions “through four complementary lenses: the lens of their own autobiographies as learners of reflective practice, the lens of learners’ eyes, the lens of colleagues’ perceptions, and the lens of theoretical, philosophical, and research literature.”²⁰

cross-culture: a concept that recognizes and appreciates differences in backgrounds and ethnicities, including regional and national differences, and supports effective interactions. Cross-cultural communication, attitudes, and behaviors embrace and appreciate cultural differences.²¹

cultural competence: the ability to understand, accept, appreciate, and interact with individuals of different backgrounds and cultures.

cultural diversity: a term that can refer to the variety of human cultures in the world, where *culture* broadly comprises ethnicity, religion, political views, age, and economic status. Cultural diversity can also be used to describe the variety of individual beliefs and traits among people of one culture.^{22,23}

cultural learning assumptions: often-unspoken expectations shaped by affiliation with a broadly stable set of attitudes and beliefs shared by a group of people. These assumptions could give rise to habits of learning and assumptions about the ways teaching and learning are practiced.²⁴

diversity: the range of similarities and differences each individual brings to an organization, including but not limited to national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, family structure, and diversity of thought, all of which is shaped by culture, background, experiences, and other elements.¹⁶

equity: a goal as well as a process for working toward achieving justice and inclusion. As a process, equity requires interrogating how systems of power and privilege operate so that they may be challenged. As a goal, equity strives to equip individuals with the tools and resources they need to survive or succeed based on their **positionalities** and their personal, educational, and professional goals. Equity is distinct from equality: Equality means providing the same to all, whereas equity recognizes that many experience a range of barriers arising from bias and systemic structures. Equity acknowledges these imbalances and makes individualized adjustments through resource redistribution and supports to provide opportunities for all individuals and communities to thrive.

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ethnicity: sharing a distinctive cultural and historical tradition often associated with race, place of origin, ancestry, or creed.⁶

frames of reference: individuals' values, assumptions, and attitudes that influence how they understand, perceive, and interact with their environment and with other individuals.²⁵

gatekeeping: the activity of controlling or limiting who has access or is allowed to lay claim to something. Gatekeeping can involve restricting who is allowed to participate in a conversation or join a discipline.

gender: “the social classification of people as masculine and/or feminine.”⁶

gender identity: “a person's conscious sense of maleness and/or femaleness. This sense of self is separate and distinct from one's biological sex.”⁶

harassment: “engaging in a series of comments and/or actions that are known, or ought to reasonably be known, to be unwelcome. Harassment can involve offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning, or unwelcome words and/or actions.”⁶

hegemonic assumptions: assumptions informed by socially dominant attitudes or beliefs; they are maintained by systems of power and oppression that are not beneficial to all individuals. Thought to be “natural,” unchangeable, or in our best interests, these assumptions instead work to maintain the status quo. An example of a hegemonic belief in higher education is that student engagement and motivation is driven entirely by the instructor's charismatic personality.²⁶

heterosexism: the mistaken assumption that heterosexuality is superior and preferable, and is the only “right, normal, or moral” expression of sexuality. This definition is often used when examining less overt discrimination against individuals who identify as **LGBTQIA2S+**, discrimination that may be unintentional and unrecognized by the person or organization responsible.⁶

historical disadvantage: disadvantage resulting from historical patterns of institutionalized and other forms of systemic discrimination, sometimes legalized social, political, cultural, ethnic, religious and economic discrimination, as well as discrimination in employment. This includes under-representation experienced by disadvantaged groups such as women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, **LGBTQIA2S+** persons, and racialized people.⁶

implicit bias: “attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.”²⁷

indigenous: generally used in the international context to refer to people who are original to a particular land or territory.

inequity by design: “mechanisms that under-develop students' cognitive resources and consequently undermine their confidence as learners.”²⁸ *Equity* by design, on the other hand, requires that instructors work to help students achieve competence to build their confidence as learners. An example of inequity by design is the passage of laws in the United States in the 1830s criminalizing the teaching of literacy in communities of color; this undermined and under-developed the resources on which these communities

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could draw. It is important to recognize inequity by design to shift the blame put on under-prepared students to the systems that have caused them to be underprepared to identify ways to support their growth and learning.²⁹

intercultural competence: individuals' capacity to respectfully engage and communicate with others so that they have the benefit of differing cultural perspectives.

intersectionality: a concept used in critical theory to highlight the interconnected nature of socially constructed categories (e.g., race, class, and gender) as they apply to a given individual or group. Intersectionality can be key to illuminating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.³⁰

LGBTQIA2S+: an acronym that aims to encompass the diversity within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, intersex, allies, and two-spirited communities. The + acknowledges the limitations of the acronym often used to describe gender identities and sexual orientations that are not cisgender or heterosexual.⁶

linguistic diversity: a subset of **cultural diversity**. Linguistic diversity refers to the variety of languages, dialects, and speech and grammatical patterns used by people in different cultures as well as within the same culture.³¹

marginalization: relegating individuals or groups of individuals to minor, unimportant, or peripheral positions based on their identities. This practice can refer to the historical exclusion of racial and ethnic minority group members from higher education and other arenas, as well as contemporary marginalization (e.g., groups of individuals may be marginalized through the content that is included in a course, such as the voices given a platform).³²

microaggressions: "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group."⁸ Although Sue et al.'s original definition specifically indicated race as the focus of **bias**, the term has since been expanded to apply to a variety of identity factors, such as sexuality, gender, and ability.³³

microintervention strategies: "concrete action steps and dialogues that targets, allies, and bystanders can perform" to address **microaggressions**. These steps have four goals: (1) making the invisible visible, (2) disarming the microaggression, (3) educating the perpetrator, and (4) seeking external reinforcement or support.⁸

multiracial: a person whose heritage includes members of multiple racial groups.

people of the global majority (PGM): a collective term that refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global South, and/or have been racialized as "ethnic minorities." PGM is used by some as synonymous with Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), as this represents more than 80% of the world's population. PGM more accurately points out the demographic inaccuracy of the term "minority" and can be a more empowering term.

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positionality: the way one's social location or position is assigned and negotiated as the result of combining various social factors or identities (e.g., race, sex, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation).³⁴

power: access to privileges such as information/knowledge, connections, experience and expertise, resources, and decision-making that enhance a person's chances of getting what they need to live a comfortable, safe, productive, and profitable life.⁶

privilege: unearned power, benefits, advantages, access, and/or opportunities that exist for members of the dominant group(s) in society. Privilege can also refer to the relative privilege of one group compared to another.⁶

process observation: a relational technique that focuses on the feelings of an individual to unveil the beliefs and attitudes behind them, rather than on the content of what the individual is saying. Derald Wing Sue recommends process observations to facilitate discussions on race and other difficult topics.³⁵

race: a social construct. This means that society forms ideas of race based on geographic, historical, political, economic, social, and cultural factors, as well as physical traits, although none of these can legitimately be used to classify groups of people.⁶

racial profiling: any action that relies on stereotypes about race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, place of origin, or a combination of these rather than on a reasonable suspicion to single out a person for greater scrutiny or different treatment.⁶

racialization: the process by which societies construct races as real, different, and unequal in ways that affect economic, political, and social life.⁶

racism: a belief that one group is superior or inferior to others. Racism can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs, or hate crimes; it can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values, and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, people do not even realize they have these beliefs. Instead, they are assumptions that have evolved over time and have become part of systems and institutions.⁶

rhetorical incoherence: "difficulty in articulation, barely audible speech, voice constriction, trembling voices, and mispronunciation of common words associated with race."³⁵

stereotype threat: "being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's social group."³⁶ Stereotype threat can occur in relation to many facets of identity, including race, ethnicity, and gender. In educational settings, for example, research has demonstrated that students' performance may be negatively impacted "by the awareness that one's behavior might be viewed through the lens of stereotypes" if those identities (or stereotypes related to those identities) are highlighted prior to the performance.³⁶ Situations that highlight one's social identity factors (e.g., asking demographic questions before an assessment) can activate stereotype threat.¹⁸

systemic barrier: a barrier embedded in the social or administrative structures of an organization, including the physical accessibility of an organization; its policies, practices, and decision-making processes; or its culture. These may appear neutral on the surface but exclude members of groups.⁶

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systemic discrimination: patterns of behavior, policies, or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization and create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for groups.⁶

tokenization: when someone is approached, befriended, questioned, or included because they are a member of a particular identity and to act as a representative of that identity.³⁷ For example, tokenization can involve an instructor or peer asking a student to act as spokesperson for a certain identity group. Tokenization also refers to the practice of making insincere or symbolic efforts to give the appearance of fairness, as when an instructor includes perspectives from an underrepresented group in an arbitrary way (i.e., only once during an entire course) to assuage criticism about diversity and inclusiveness in the classroom.²⁹

underrepresented groups or individuals: people who have been shown to be underrepresented nationally in their fields relative to their number in the general population.¹⁸ In the United States, this term primarily refers to people who identify as members of racial/ethnic minority groups (African-American or Black, Hispanic or Latinx, American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders); as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; and individuals with disabilities.³⁸

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Additional resources

These selected resources support further learning as well critical thinking and reflection regarding DEI. Many other excellent educational opportunities exist, including those cited in this document's references, and a more extensive list will be made available on iayt.org.

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