Ensuring Culturally Inclusive Online Learning for International Students: A Delphi Study to Identify Requisite Instructor Competencies

Kristen Lina Heaster-Ekholm
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Ensuring Culturally Inclusive Online Learning for International Students: 
A Delphi Study to Identify Requisite Instructor Competencies

A Dissertation Presented

by

KRISTEN LINA HEASTER-EKHOLM

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2023

College of Education
DEDICATION

To all those willing to cross the rigid borders of familiarity and comfort in pursuit of learning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Cristine Smith, for her advice, support, and encouragement during this research project. I am also indebted to my committee members, Dr. Torrey Trust and Dr. John Comings, for the time, input and guidance they so generously provided, and which helped to bring this dissertation to fruition.

This research was supported in part by a Graduate School Dissertation Research Grant and a EPRA Summer 2022 Research & Writing Fellowship from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, as well as a Love of Learning Grant from Phi Kappa Phi. In addition, I am grateful to the International Programs Office (IPO) for my graduate assistantship and the opportunity to be a part of the important work of campus internationalization. I am especially grateful to Carol Lebold, my supervisor, for her enthusiasm, encouragement, and some of the best conversations of my time at UMass.

To my fellow students in the International Education concentration, your camaraderie and friendship has been the highlight of this program. I am honored to have shared this learning journey with such brilliant, inspiring, and kind individuals.

To the soon-to-be-Dr. Amy Smallwood, I am beyond grateful to have you as a friend and as a co-journer in this PhD adventure.

To my parents Dwight and Sandi Ekholm and sister Karin Ekholm, thank you for a lifetime of love and support and for being my biggest cheerleaders.
To my son Sven, your birth in the midst of this dissertation process changed everything. You are an indomitable ray of joy and light, and I carry you with me in everything I do.

To my husband Jason, your unwavering support has been my anchor through the frequently tumultuous waters of this PhD journey. Your steadfastness and love have helped to make this dream a reality. Thank you.

Lastly, this research would not have been possible without the generous contribution of time and expertise of my study participants. I wish to thank the following 22 contributors and another 7 who chose to remain anonymous:

Susan Adams (Achieving the Dream)
Seema Atalla (Concordia University Irvine)
Erin J. Blauvelt (Clarkson University)
Dr. Chelsea Chandler (Bowling Green State University)
Dr. Brett Christie (Nectar Learning)
Dr. Lysette Davi (The University of Arizona)
Dr. Darla Deardorff (Duke University)
Pamela Dutta (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
Dr. Didem Ekici (Peralta Community College District / College of Alameda)
Dr. Chrystal George Mwangi (George Mason University)
Dr. Christopher Glass (Boston College)
Dr. Christopher Johnstone (University of Minnesota)
Dr. Kevin Kelly (San Francisco State University)
Laura Lamour Burns (Florida International University)
Dr. Andrew Meade (Vassar College)
Dr. Jacqi Mosselson (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
Dr. Gudrun Nyunt (Northern Illinois University)
Dr. Shawna Shapiro (Middlebury College)
Louise Michelle Vital (Lesley University)
Dr. Laura Wangsness Willemsen (Concordia University, St. Paul)
Dr. Christina W. Yao (University of South Carolina)
Fred Zinn (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
ENSURING CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE ONLINE LEARNING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A DELPHI STUDY TO IDENTIFY REQUISITE INSTRUCTOR COMPETENCIES

MAY 2023

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Directed by: Professor Cristine Smith

The dramatic expansion of online learning in U.S. higher education has been accompanied by a notable shift in the demographics of students enrolled in these courses. International students are among those participating in online courses in growing numbers, infusing the virtual space with greater cultural diversity. Many instructors are unprepared for this change. Culture plays an influential role in how we learn, yet instructors rarely consider it in the design and facilitation of their online courses. This can have a negative impact on learners and often affects international students in disproportionate ways. The purpose of this study was to identify essential competencies that higher education instructors at U.S. institutions need in order to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students. Using a Delphi approach, I solicited input from 29 scholars and practitioners from across the U.S. who were experts in international education, international student support services, intercultural competence, culturally responsive
pedagogy, and instructional design for online learning. Through three iterative rounds of questionnaires, I drew on panelists’ expertise in order to determine what competencies instructors need in order to design and facilitate inclusive online courses; to vet and rate an extensive list of knowledge, attitudes and skills in terms of their usefulness in promoting inclusion; and to distill these into a list of 14 most essential competencies. The competencies that emerged from this study can equip instructors to better serve international students through the design and facilitation of online courses that are culturally inclusive. The findings can also be useful to centers for teaching and learning and campus administrators, who can refer to the competencies in developing systems, policies, resources, and training opportunities to better support instructors and international students at their institutions.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Even before a global pandemic caused higher education institutions across the United States to move instruction online in the spring of 2020, the expanding digitalization of learning was changing the face of education. Although overall enrollment in U.S. universities has declined over the past several years, enrollment in online learning has been increasing steadily since 2002 (Seaman, Allan, & Seaman, 2018). The pandemic only accelerated this trend. This acceleration also brought about a rapid expansion in the diversity of online students. With the onset of the pandemic, large numbers of international students found themselves taking online courses both from within and from outside of the U.S. (Baer & Martel, 2020). On the one hand, this change is exciting. Learners from around the world are participating in U.S. higher education in ways that were unthinkable even two decades ago. Yet it also presents new challenges. The increasing diversity of students enrolled online requires courses that are designed with cultural inclusiveness in mind. Yet many instructors are unprepared for this shift.

Despite evidence of the role cultural norms play in shaping learning processes, culture is rarely considered in the design of online courses. This can have a negative impact on learners and often affects international students in disproportionate ways. For this research study, I utilized the Delphi method to explore what university instructors need to know, believe and be able to do in order to create culturally inclusive online courses. By soliciting input from experts international education,
international student support services, intercultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and instructional design for online learning, I identified a set of requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills. The resulting list of competencies can provide instructors guidance on how to create more inclusive online courses. As they work towards inclusion, instructors will find themselves becoming more attuned to diverse perspectives and increasingly effective at communicating with global audiences. The findings from this study can also help administrators of centers of teaching and learning know how to provide better resources, training and professional development opportunities for their campuses. Ultimately, the goal of my research is to equip instructors and institutions with information that will help them ensure students from all backgrounds feel welcome, engaged, and successful in their online learning.

Background of the Study

International student mobility at the global level has been trending upwards over the past two decades. UNESCO (2019) defines international students as those “who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin”. The number of international students enrolling in postsecondary institutions worldwide reached 6.1 million in 2019, having grown an average of 5.5% per year since 1998 (OECD, 2021). The U.S. boasts the greatest number of international students, currently hosting 16% of the global international student population. The U.K. and Australia, each with 8% of the global international student population, host the next greatest number (OECD, 2021). According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), more than half of international students studying in the
U.S. originate from China (35%) and India (18%), with students from South Korea (4%), Canada (3%) and Saudi Arabia (2%) rounding out the top five sending nations (IIE, 2021a). International students studying at U.S. universities or colleges generally hold F-1 visas, which signify nonimmigrant temporary status (U.S. Department of State, n.d).

Enrollment in online learning has also been experiencing an upward trend. A recent report detailed that, while overall enrollment in universities in the United States has declined over the past four years, online learning enrollment has been increasing steadily since 2002 (Seaman, Allen, & Seaman, 2018). There are no comprehensive datasets tracking international students’ enrollment in online courses, but it is safe to assume that the number was relatively small leading up to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to March 2020, students on F-1 visas were limited by immigration law to taking no more than one online course per semester towards their course of study (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2020a). Foreign students residing outside of the U.S. were able to enroll in certain U.S. online programs, however, and Seaman et al. (2018) put that number of students at 45,475. This meant that approximately 1.5% of the population of students enrolled exclusively in online courses at that time were foreign students.

The global pandemic led to a dramatic uptick in online learning, including by international students. In spring of 2020, the majority of universities across the nation transitioned to remote emergency instruction. A survey by the IIE of 599 higher education institutions in the U.S. found that 99.5% of these pivoted to remote virtual instruction at the outset of the pandemic (Martel, 2020). Online-only or hybrid models
of instruction were the norm for most institutions that ensuing summer and fall. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2021) indicated that approximately 75% of undergraduate students were enrolled in at least one distance education course in fall 2020 and 44% were exclusively taking distance education courses. In addition, 71% of post-baccalaureate students were enrolled in at least one distance education course for fall 2020 and 52 percent of post-baccalaureate students were exclusively taking distance education courses. An IIE study of 700 U.S. higher education institutions indicated that 20% of their international students were participating in online courses from outside of the U.S. (Martel, 2020).

The sudden and dramatic switch to online learning required a policy shift by the U.S. Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). In March 2020, the U.S. office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) temporarily modified its policy to allow students who were actively enrolled at a U.S. institution to take online courses in excess of the 1 course per semester limit so that they could continue to make progress towards their degree (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2020). The modification was subsequently extended to cover the 2021-22 academic year (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2021). In May of 2022, the government again extended the modification for those international students who had enrolled at a U.S. institution prior to March 2020 and maintained compliance in terms of their nonimmigrant status (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2022). International students who enrolled after March 9, 2020 or who had fallen out of compliance were once again limited to no more than one online course per semester.
Although the legal parameters around how many online courses an international student can take towards their course of study continues to oscillate, it is safe to say that the number of international students in online courses has significantly increased over the past few years. Students who have had positive experiences in online courses will likely continue to enroll in them even when they do not count towards their degree. In addition, the number of foreign students pursuing online degree programs from U.S. universities is also likely to increase (Durrani, 2020) now that the infrastructure for online learning has improved and offerings have expanded.

However, the increasing presence of global learners in online courses has highlighted a gap in instructor and institutional preparedness to adequately support them. Mahalingappa et al. (2021) observed that while institutions may declare an interest in internationalization, they rarely have a clear strategy or understanding of how to support international students. The researchers noted that although most institutions will offer students visa support and some will provide programs to help them with cultural, social or language adjustment, little else is offered to support them in their academic success. Instructors are also struggling in the face of these demographic and technical shifts. Many have voiced a lack of confidence in their ability to design and teach online courses that are equitable and inclusive and meet the needs of learners with diverse cultural backgrounds (Haan et al., 2017; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020; Mahalingappa et al., 2021).

The global pandemic has sharply accelerated the growth of online learning, bringing with it a rapid expansion in diversity among online students. This evolution in
learner diversity has not seen parallel transformations in how online learning is conceived and created, however. The increasing diversity of students enrolled online requires courses that are designed with cultural inclusiveness in mind. Yet many instructors are not equipped to meet this new challenge.

**Statement of the Problem**

International student enrollment in higher education online courses is increasing, bringing a greater diversity in student backgrounds, experiences and expectations to these online spaces (Martel, 2020). Instructors, many of whom are relatively new to online teaching, are not adequately prepared to consider the design and facilitation of their courses in light of this demographic shift. They struggle to design courses that embrace and affirm cultural difference.

Culture has an indisputable influence on education. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASM) (2018) emphasized that “all learners grow and learn in culturally defined ways in culturally defined contexts” (p. 22) and that each person is uniquely shaped by the contexts in which they live and learn. Culture not only shapes the content of what we study and value (Boykin, 1994) but also our expectations around learning transactions themselves (Powell, 1997). Cultural and social norms play a role in how learning is structured, the meaning-making processes learning engage in, and how knowledge is displayed and assessed.

When international students enter online courses that are not designed with diversity in mind, they often experience discomfort, frustration and alienation (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). The resulting tension can
inhibit their learning and leave both students and instructors dissatisfied (Kang & Chang, 2016). In order to effectively engage and teach international students in online courses, instructors need to have an awareness of and appreciation for the role culture and cultural differences play in online teaching and learning. However, even those who recognize the importance of culturally inclusive pedagogical practices frequently express concern that they do not have the necessary knowledge and skill to actually implement them in their own praxis (Heitner & Jennings, 2016).

Instructors need help in identifying what specific knowledge, attitudes and skills will help them create more culturally inclusive online courses. Once identified, these competencies will allow them to gain a clearer picture of how to bridge cultural differences in the design and facilitation of their courses. Once implemented, these competencies can begin to mitigate barriers that misunderstandings of cultural difference have created for international students and begin to foster more equal opportunities for their academic success.

**Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this study was to identify essential competencies that higher education instructors at U.S. institutions need in order to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students. The increasing cultural and national diversity of students within online higher education spaces requires courses that are designed with cultural inclusiveness in mind. This study helps to fill a gap in our understanding around equity for and inclusion of international students in online learning. By capturing the input of experts and distilling these into a
list of requisite instructor competencies, my research takes a step towards ensuring that instructors are equipped to design and facilitate culturally inclusive online courses that meet the academic needs of international students.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided my overall study:

RQ1: What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to design online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

RQ2: What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

RQ3: What instructor competencies do experts believe are most essential to improving international students’ online learning experience?

Significance of the Study

Instructors can use the list of competencies developed in this study to identify areas of strength and weakness in their own practice, help them grow more attuned to diverse perspectives, and gain a better idea of how to create inclusive online courses. Institutions can also benefit from this list of competencies by using them to guide planning around training, resources, and professional development opportunities for instructors. Lastly, researchers can use the identified competencies to inform future research in the area of cultural inclusion, international students, and online learning.
My research begins to fill the gap that exists in our attention to and understanding of equity and inclusion of international students in online higher education courses. This study makes several unique contributions to the fields of international education and online learning. First, my research challenges a dominant narrative that paints international students as academically deficient and in need of remediation (Lee & Bligh, 2019). I highlight how student and instructor challenges identified in extant literature are primarily rooted in cultural difference and emphasize that instead of expecting accommodation on the part of the international students, we must recognize that it is curriculum, pedagogies and design that are deficient when they do not meet the needs of diverse learners (Chita-Tegmark et al., 2012). Second, although there is growing awareness of the importance of designing equitable and inclusive spaces for online learning (Kelly & Zakrajsek, 2020; Morong & DesBiens, 2016; Woodley et al., 2017), much of the research is US-centric and engages with the topic through the lenses of U.S. multiculturalism and culturally responsive pedagogies. My research explores what similarities and differences exist in recommendations for equity and inclusion when the focus is on international students and centers the concept of cultural inclusion. A third unique contribution this study makes to the field is a pragmatic one. Online course design equity rubrics currently in use are written in the form of standards and criteria. While this makes them useful for evaluation purposes, it is often difficult for instructors to know how to operationalize them. In identifying specific competencies instructors need, my research provides instructors with concrete skills, attitudes and knowledge they need in order to be culturally inclusive.
Definition of Key Terms

Numerous terms that I used throughout this study could be conceptualized differently by different people. Below are descriptions for how I have defined and operationalized several key terms in my research and analysis processes.

**Attitude:** Feeling or disposition towards — or belief about — someone or something.

**Competency:** The knowledge, attitude, and/or skill to successfully and proficiently perform a specific task or goal.

**Culture:** Shared standards and beliefs held by groups of humans that allow them to attribute meaning to behavior and symbols, interpret what others are doing and saying, and judge that behavior as acceptable or unacceptable (Goodenough, 1957).

**Cultural inclusion:** Recognizing and appreciating cultural diversity and integrating it in a way that enriches the overall learning experience of students (Barker et al., 2016).

**Culturally responsive teaching:** using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (Gay, 2010).

**Design:** The process of creating learning content and activities. This often includes assessing who the learners are and what they need; developing goals and learning objectives; creating materials and media; determining what criteria and
methods to use to assess learning; and compiling these in a learning management system (LMS) or other online platform (Berge, 1995).

*Diversity:* Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).

*Equity:* The creation of opportunities for historically marginalized or underserved populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.

*Facilitation:* The process of leading students through learning content and activities. This often includes direct instruction; initiating and guiding discussion; introducing activities and assignments; providing direction and feedback; communicating and interacting with students; and evaluating student progress and learning.

*Instructional design:* the creation of learning experiences and materials by utilizing an approach that includes needs assessment, process design, development, and evaluation to promote the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills (Association for Talent Development, n.d.). Instructional design involves understanding the conditions that lead to effective and efficient learning (Merrill, 2013) and utilizing these to create engaging learning resources, tools and environments.
**Inclusion:** The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions (Association of American Colleges & Universities, n.d.).

**Intercultural competence:** The ability to function effectively across cultures, to think and act appropriately, and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds (Leung et al., 2014).

**International students:** Students who are enrolled in higher education institutions outside their country of origin (UNESCO, 2019). They may or may not have crossed a national or territorial border in pursuit of this education.

**Knowledge:** Information, principles or facts that contribute to the practical or theoretical understanding of a subject.

**Online learning:** Education that takes place via the internet, with no requirements for on-campus activity. Learning sessions and activities can be structured for synchronous (simultaneous with real-time interaction) or asynchronous (done on one’s own time) participation.

**Panel:** A term used within a Delphi study to signify a group of participants with similar expertise working to answer the same questions.
Skill: An ability (physical or mental) that is necessary to successfully perform actions or tasks.

Organization of Chapters

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In this initial chapter, I provided an overview of the study and its purpose, the research questions guiding it, and the context of the problem. Online student populations in higher education are increasingly diverse and include growing numbers of international students. Instructors, many of whom are relatively new to online teaching, are ill prepared to design courses that meet the moment by embracing and affirming cultural differences. As a result, international students often experience discomfort, frustration and alienation that can inhibit their learning. With this study, I sought to identify essential competencies that higher education instructors at U.S. institutions need in order to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students.

In Chapter 2, I review the connections between culture, learning and the brain and the implications of these for international students studying in U.S. higher education programs. I examine the current research on the experiences of international students in online courses as well as on the experiences of instructors of international students. I identify the challenges that instructors and students face in online courses and distill the researchers’ findings into a list of research-based practice recommendations for improving international student success. I also include a brief review of the concepts of culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching and how these integrate with equitable practices in online learning to inform
culturally inclusive practice. The chapter concludes with a description of my conceptual framework.

In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology of this study. I provide a rationale for utilizing a Delphi process and lay out the details of my research design, sampling procedures, and data collection procedures. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the findings from my study along with their implications. In Chapter 4, I summarize my process for analyzing the data and describe the results of the study. In Chapter 5, I discuss the results and their implications and outline recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to identify a preliminary list of essential competencies that all higher education instructors at U.S. institutions need in order to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students. Competencies are the knowledge, attitude, and/or skills needed to successfully and proficiently perform a specific task or goal. The written structure of competencies is both an important and distinguishing characteristic of these statements, as it helps to ensure that they are clear and succinct. Competency statements generally begin with a present tense action verb, include an object, and do not include evaluative or relative adjectives or adverbs such as effective, quickly, etc. (University of Texas School of Public Health, 2012).

Competencies are helpful for instructors and institutions alike because they provide “strong, research-based answers as to what works, what doesn't work, and how that will and should impact our current and future practice” (Ferdig, 2017). Instructors can utilize competencies to guide their practice and to assess their own strengths and weaknesses in an area. Institutions can use competencies to guide their design of training and professional development offerings for instructors.

The research questions guiding my study were:
RQ1: What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to design online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

RQ2: What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

RQ3: What instructor competencies do experts believe are most essential to improving international students’ online learning experience?

These questions focus on instructor competencies related to cultural inclusion, online teaching, and interacting with international students. Consequently, in this chapter I review the research related to these key areas. In the first section, I explore the relationship between culture and learning and what this means for international students as online learners. Next, I consider current literature examining the experiences of international students in online courses, highlighting the challenges they encounter. This is followed by a section summarizing the research on instructor experiences teaching international students in online courses. I then review literature on the equitable design and teaching of online courses, including practice-based recommendations and available equity standards and rubrics. I conclude the chapter with a diagram and description of my conceptual framework for this research study.
Research on the Relationship Between Culture and Learning

What is Culture?

To explore the role of culture and cultural inclusion in online learning first requires defining these concepts. Culture is a complex topic. People use the term to connote a multitude of things ranging from something people reside in or possess to their value, attributes and beliefs (Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2012). The varied meanings attributed to culture can make it difficult to investigate—or even simply talk about. For the purpose of this study, I take culture to mean the shared standards and beliefs held by groups of humans that allow them to attribute meaning to behavior and symbols, interpret what others are doing and saying, and judge that behavior as acceptable or unacceptable (Goodenough, 1957). Cultural groups are comprised of members who share a common way of seeing the world, similar ideas about how to interact with and treat each other, specific tools for communication (such as language or symbols), and distinct ways of teaching and learning these tools (Scollon et al., 2012). Culture makes our lives easier and enables us to function. By providing a group of people with shared standards, culture allows group members to anticipate and predict each others’ behavior, attribute meaning to behavior, and judge actions based on their perceived meaning. This basic human function is what helps us to understand and interact with one another. Without it, other people's actions would be incomprehensible to us (Goodenough, 1957).

In the discourses surrounding international students, the notion of culture is often conflated with nationality (Geller, 2017). This idea is evident in the sentiment that
students have left one culture and are now living in another (Scollon et al., 2012). Culture is also frequently conflated with ethnicity (Rogoff, 2003). However, viewing culture as an aspect of someone’s geographic origin or ethnic membership is not only simplistic, but potentially dangerous. The trouble with this view, known as cultural essentialism (Verkuyten & Brug, 2004), is that it assumes that people’s behavior falls into distinctive and fixed patterns that allow us to “claim certainty about what sort of people can be found where” (Holliday, 2011, p. 5). An essentialist stance on culture results in a tendency to use homogeneous and a priori categories to try and understand and define people. It is used to make assumptions such as what is typical and atypical behavior, who is normal and who is peculiar, and who is foreign and who is local. An essentialist stance also sets up and reifies a border between ‘them’ and ‘us’ and between ‘their culture’ and ‘our culture’ and leads to habits of othering that produce judgment and prejudice (Goodfellow & Hewling, 2005).

We must remain wary of attempts to neatly package the varied and fluctuating identities of individuals into single, fixed national personas (Nathan, 2015). “While it may be the case that collective characteristics are emphasised [sic] where large groups of nationals are working together,” Goodfellow and Hewling (2005) pointed out, “they may not be exhibited at the smaller interactional level, particularly where the interaction is cross-cultural” (p.357). In other words, at the individual level—where learning takes place—national or ethnic conceptions of culture are not very useful because individuals do not always model characteristics ascribed to their collective culture. This is because individuals belong to many different cultures simultaneously,
because interpersonal interactions are complex, and because the context in which the interaction is taking place acts on the interaction (Goodfellow & Hewling, 2005). In addition, individuals may choose to emphasize or de-emphasize aspects of their culture based on the specific context they are in (Rogoff, 2003).

When it comes to research involving culture and learning, thinking of culture in terms of a priori categories—and trying to figure out something about the people involved based on such categories—is a fruitless task. Instead, it is much more useful to use the stance advocated by Rogoff (2003) and Scollon et al. (2012) and observe how people engage with a given cultural community. Adopting this research posture invites a subtle yet important shift in thinking. As Scollon et al. (2012) put it, “we should not focus so much on the people and try to figure out something about them based on the culture they belong to… [but] rather we should focus on what they are doing and try to understand what kinds of tools they have at their disposal to do it” (p.5). In doing so, we begin to see culture not as a thing that defines people, but as a tool that people use to engage with situations and with one another.

For this study, I chose to adopt the approach proposed by Rogoff (2003) and Scollon et al. (2012). Although I see culture as shared standards and beliefs held by groups of humans, it was not my intention to analyze any particular system of meaning or behavior. Instead, I was interested in the role of culture in teaching and learning and the extent to which people have access to, and know how to use, different tools based on their membership in different cultural communities (Scollon et al., 2012). Building on the ideas of Rogoff (2003), I viewed the cultures of international students and
instructors not in terms of identity (e.g. “Who are you? What are you?”) but in terms of interaction, access and participation (e.g. “What cultural practices are familiar to you? What cultural practices have you made use of? What ways of doing things are customary? What sorts of everyday approaches are expected?” Rogoff, 2003, p.77-78).

By approaching culture in this way, I departed from a more traditional approach to intercultural research that bases analysis and recommendations about international students on generalizations derived from their nationality and/or ethnicity (Goodfellow, 2005). In doing so, I sought to honor the complexity and dynamism of culture that we see in this 21st century. Whereas it may have been acceptable to assume homogeneity within national or regional communities in generations past, it no longer is in today’s interconnected and mobile societies. Instead, an individuals’ expression of culture flows from a sense of belonging within many different groups such as a family, community, or workplace, and a variety of affiliations such as a political party, religion, or school, to name just a few (Rogoff, 2003).

By approaching culture in this way, I am also doing something that at first glance may appear contradictory: I am simultaneously advocating for international students as a distinct body of learners with unique needs in the online environment that emerge from cultural differences, while also arguing that understanding cultural difference through a national lens is not only ineffectual but potentially harmful. Cultural differences in teaching and learning are real, and the way we treat culture can either be a barrier or a bridge to greater understanding and equity. Harm results from the deficit narratives that commonly emerge in the discourse around international students. When
culture is used as a simplistic explanation for differences in academic expectations and performance and becomes a means to other international students, a barrier is created. For example, an instructor may view a student’s behavior in class as flawed in some way, because it is different from what they are used to and they do not understand it. This may result in the instructor engaging with that student less than with other students whom they feel like they understand or who are more like them. However, if that instructor were instead to recognize that culture shapes the way individuals communicate and make meaning of situations and information, and if that instructor were to try and understand what cultural tools a given student has at their disposal to use, then they can build a bridge towards greater understanding between themselves and their students. In this way, the instructor can use culture as a means to create bridges to greater equity and inclusion of international students. By centering this study on cultural inclusion, my intent was to encourage instructors to a) acknowledge the influential role culture has on teaching and learning; b) recognize that people operate from varying cultural tool sets; and c) make space for and incorporate a variety of cultural perspectives, approaches, and tools within their online courses.

**Culture and Learning**

Culture is a powerful force in human development and learning. Culture influences what and how people learn and that each person is uniquely shaped by the contexts in which they develop and live (NASM, 2018). People are also uniquely shaped by the relationships that surround them as they live and learn. These, too, are shaped by culture and, in turn, shape our processes of development and learning. In her seminal
work on the cultural nature of human development, Rogoff (2003) argued that cognitive development is not simply a result of biological processes but is profoundly influenced by interpersonal and community processes. Humans, in other words, do not come to understand their world in isolation, nor by simply progressing through predictable and generalized developmental phases. Instead, humans come to understand their world through participating with others in shared sociocultural activities. In making this assertion, Rogoff’s work built on a Vygotskian tradition (Mey, 2005). Lev Vygotsky is credited with developing the sociocultural approach to learning in the early part of the 20th century (Vygotsky, 1978). According to sociocultural theory, people’s cultural experiences profoundly shape how they think as well as other cognitive functions such as memory, reasoning and problem solving (Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995). Vygotsky (1978) believed that the process of learning to use cultural tools such as language and literacy from others who are more adept at them is what helps children progress in their cognitive development. Vygotsky saw this interaction with others as central to the learning process, an insight which contradicted the prevailing view of psychologists in his day (Rogoff, 2003). In lieu of seeing thinking as internal and solitary, Vygotsky proposed that cognitive development was primarily active and interactive and took shape “in shared endeavors with other people building on the cultural practices and traditions of communities” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 237).

Evidence that culture has a role in shaping human development and cognition can be found in the emerging field of cultural neuroscience. Recent advances in technology have provided tools such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI),
electroencephalogram (EEG), and magnetoencephalography (MEG) that allow scientists
to record neural activity in the brain and learn how neural processes map to mental
ones (Chiao, 2009). Researchers have been able to get a glimpse of the relationships
between the brain, culture and learning and have gained new insight into the
foundational mechanisms of cognitive processes as well as how these are influenced by
cultural priming\(^1\). Specifically, cultural neuroscientists have discovered that neural
activity related to cognitive processing differs among people from different cultures
and affects areas of the brain related to attention, memory, motivation, and
perceptions of self and others (see for example Gutchess et al., 2006; Hedden et al.,
2008; Kitayama & Park, 2014; Paige et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2007). These findings
substantiate not only that cultural differences exist, but also that they are wired deep
within our neural circuitry. This suggests that cultural values and behaviors are often
beyond one’s conscious awareness and choice (Chang, 2017), which has implications for
learning and especially cross-cultural learning contexts.

While findings from the field of cultural neuroscience allow us to see some of the
variations in individuals due to cultural differences, findings in the field of mind, brain,
and education science (MBE) help us to see that, despite differences, there are also
overarching similarities in how humans learn. The field of MBE has also benefited
tremendously from recent advances in technology that allow researchers to use tools

\(^1\) Cultural priming refers to the phenomenon in which culture shapes one’s response when exposed to a
certain stimulus as well as subsequent, related stimuli (Gutchess & Indeck, 2009).
like fMRI, EEG, and MEG to gain a better understanding of what happens in the brain as people learn.

In an effort to apply the neuroscience of learning to online teaching, Tokuhama-Espinosa (2020) laid out six key principles of learning that are supported by MBE. Tokuhama-Espinosa and Nouri (2020) confirmed the validity of these principles in an international Delphi study that solicited input from 112 experts in MBE policy, practice and research from 30 countries. In that same study, the researchers sought to identify what aspects of MBE should be included in teacher training. Based on the findings from the 2020 Delphi as well as a series of two previous international Delphi studies that sought to establish agreement around shared principles and standards for MBE science (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2008, 2017), Tokuhama-Espinosa (2020) asserted that these principles speak to what is global—and globally similar—about human learning, stating that they “are true for all human brains independent of where the learners live, how old they are, or their cultural upbringing” (p. 2).

The six principles include (1) uniqueness; (2) different potentials; (3) prior experience; (4) constant change; (5) neuroplasticity; and (6) memory systems and attention systems (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2020, p. 2). The principle of uniqueness speaks to the idea that while human brains are remarkably similar, they are not identical. Though they form in similar ways, each person’s neural pathways vary in line with their genetics, cultures, and experiences. The principle of different potentials refers to the fact that each person’s context prepares and equips their brain differently for learning. Biology, genetics, environment, exposure and agency all influence an individual’s
capacity for learning. The principle of prior experience highlights that the brain makes sense of new information by comparing it to information that is already known and stored in its memory systems. Tokuhama-Espinosa (2020) pointed out that this function allows the brain to economize energy and effort and operate more efficiently as a result.

The principle of constant changes refers to the fact that the brain is constantly modifying itself in response to new stimuli and experiences. Since these adjustments occur at a molecular level, Tokuhama-Espinosa (2020) emphasized, it can take time for them to translate into changes in observable behavior. The principle of neuroplasticity highlights the ability of the brain to adapt and reorganize itself across the human lifespan (NASM, 2018). However, although the brain remains malleable throughout life, plasticity appears to decrease over time, meaning that people’s reliance on existing and established neural networks increases as they age (Kartoshkina, 2017; Wexler, 2008).

Lastly, the principle of memory and attention systems is meant to call attention to the important role these two functions play in cognitive processing. Without the capacity for attention and memory, the brain would be unable to learn. Correspondingly, Tokuhama-Espinosa (2020) pointed out, instructors need to make use of activities that engage students’ attention and memory in order for them to learn.

These six principles are useful when considering international students and online learning, because they articulate what are believed to be universal aspects of human learning. By keeping in mind that each learner is unique, that their context and prior experiences have prepared them differently, yet that the brain is plastic and continually capable of changing, we can approach teaching and learning in ways that
honor difference while allowing for a safe space in which change and growth can take place (Sadykova & Dauterman, 2009).

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Approaches to teaching and learning are deeply rooted in the values, beliefs, and practices of the contexts, institutions and individuals of those who practice them. Yet, surprisingly, the influential role culture plays in the classroom has often gone ignored. One exception to this is found in culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and culturally sustaining pedagogies. These asset-based approaches to teaching and learning have been gradually gaining strength over the past thirty years. Emerging against the backdrop of the civil rights era and the disability rights movement, they were developed to counter deficit narratives within education, which saw differences in culture, identity and language in students as barriers to learning.

Ladson-Billings (1992a) introduced the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* in the early 1990s in an effort to identify what K-12 public school teachers, who were predominantly white and female, needed to know to successfully teach students of color. She was troubled by the disparate academic outcomes of students of color in public schools, such as Black students comprising 41 percent of the special education population while only making up 17 percent of overall school population (Kunjufu, 1984) or suspension rates for Black students being double that of their white peers (Edelman, 1987). Her scholarship emerged against the backdrop of a decade of research that fused anthropology and education as a way to encourage teachers to think how to more closely align a students’ school experience with the culture and experiences of their
daily lives (Ladson-Billings, 1992a). Ladson-Billing (1992a) maintained that students’
cultures should be building blocks that help them gain a deeper understanding of
themselves and others as well as to help them connect new information to existing
knowledge.

A key component of culturally relevant pedagogy is that it affirms and builds on
cultural differences rather than enforces conformity and assimilation (Ladson-Billings,
1992b). *Assimilationist teaching* are pedagogies that use explicit and implicit methods to
sustain an unjust status quo and pressure minority students to conform to dominant
values and norms (Hollins, 1989). These values and norms, Ladson-Billings (1992a)
critiqued, have their roots in white, male and middle-class identities, “which [are] not
the culture[s] of reference for increasing numbers of students” (p.112). Culturally
relevant pedagogical practices, on the other hand, affirm and build on cultural
differences.

Another component of culturally relevant pedagogy is that it should spur
teachers and students to work collaboratively to challenge the status quo (Ladson-
Billings, 1992c). This is what Ladson-Billings (1992c), meant by describing culturally
relevant teaching as a *pedagogy of opposition*, that is the practices affirm and build on
cultural differences rather than ones that enforce conformity. Dixson (2021) elaborated
on this idea, emphasizing that culturally responsive teaching is about more than
validating students’ cultural identities, but is “part of a broader and significant social
justice project aimed at transforming society, not just encouraging students to
participate in the world as it is” (p.358). Teachers who practice culturally relevant
pedagogy, in summary, are those who help “students to be academically successful, culturally competent, and socio-politically critical” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.477).

Geneva Gay was another prominent voice advocating to make school classrooms more supportive for marginalized students. She developed a framework for culturally responsive teaching, which she defined as the practice of “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p.106). Gay’s approach was rooted in the idea of each child as an inherent meaning-maker, and that teachers are responsible to create and environment, strategies and structures to scaffold the meaning-making process for them (Gay, 1994). The five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching are that teachers should a) develop a knowledge base about cultural diversity; b) include ethnic and cultural diversity content in their curricula; c) demonstrate caring and build learning communities; d) communicate competently with ethnically diverse students; and e) operationalize their response to ethnic diversity in their delivery of instruction (Gay, 2002).

Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2002), both teachers turned teacher-educators, called attention to the fact that the majority of U.S. teachers—who were primarily White, female, and monolingual (Banks, 2018)—were insufficiently prepared to respond to and teach ethnically diverse students (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1992a). Both came of professional age in the 1960s, at a time when the cultural deprivation paradigm was in full bloom (Banks, 2018). Both spoke to the important role culture plays in teaching
and learning and sought to counter deficit narratives by focusing on the academic success of minoritized students through a lens of cultural validation and inclusion.

Paris (2012) built on and extended these efforts with the specific goal of challenging and transforming the conventional educational environments and systems destroying unique cultural communities, activities, and ways of doing things. He introduced the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogies as an approach to teaching that not only welcomes and values students’ individual cultures in the classroom, but also works to support and maintain them. While he acknowledged the strength of preceding resource pedagogies, he felt that none went far enough in supporting the plurality and agility of language and culture represented in and necessitated by the rapidly shifting demographics within schools and communities (Paris, 2009, 2012). Paris (2012) critiqued practices of the time—such as English-only school policies or state legislation such at Arizona House Bill 2281 that banned public schools from offering ethnic studies classes—as creating a climate that intentionally fostered “a monocultural and monolingual society based on White, middle-class norms of language and cultural being” (p.95). He advanced culturally sustaining pedagogies as a teaching approach to support multilingualism and multiculturalism in classrooms and, in doing so, to promote both cultural pluralism and cultural justice.

Collectively, these three approaches have helped us see the extent to which dominant White norms shape the idea of successful academic performance and have helped to counter narratives that paint different as deficient. However, in terms of the research that grounds these pedagogies and in terms of their reach, they lean heavily
towards K-12 settings. Scholarship on culturally responsive, relevant, and sustaining pedagogies at the higher education level is gradually beginning to emerge, however much of it is aimed at teacher preparation (Heitner & Jennings, 2016; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009). Hutchison and McAlister-Shields (2020) provided one such commentary on how culturally responsive teaching practices can be applied to higher education settings, particularly in programs for preservice teaching candidates. Their main recommendations included that future teachers should be encouraged to integrate cultural competence into their identities by adopting self-reflexive practices that help them reflect on their beliefs and biases; that future teachers should produce lesson plans that demonstrate their ability to integrate culturally responsive teaching strategies while maintaining intellectual rigor; that institutions should recruit, hire and retain diverse faculty members; and that administrators should revise faculty and course evaluation procedures to include an emphasis on culturally responsive teaching.

Hutchison and McAlister-Shields (2020) also addressed the need for culturally responsive teaching in the delivery of online higher education courses, however their only concrete recommendation is that instructors should receive additional ongoing professional development opportunities.

While the attempt by Hutchison and McAlister-Shields (2020) to apply cultural responsiveness in higher education settings is laudable given a general paucity of scholarship on the topic, their suggestions are substantively limited. More research on the value and implications of culturally responsive pedagogies in higher education settings is urgently needed. There is also a need for concrete and practical guidance on
how instructors can apply principles of cultural responsiveness within their approach to
design and teaching of their courses both off- and online.

**Research on International Students Experiences with Online Learning**

International students enroll in online courses for a variety of reasons. While
some choose them because they want to participate remotely, others take them
because they have no other choice (Okusolubo, 2018). Prior to the global pandemic that
unfolded in 2020, international students faced limits on how many online courses they
could take towards their degree. However, the unprecedented move to remote learning
and subsequent boost in online programs opened online learning up to international
students in new ways.

Research on international student experiences in online learning identified have
several benefits for students. For one, students appreciate the convenience of online
classes and being able to take them from anywhere (Karkar-Esperat, 2018). Many also
appreciated the ability to take their time digesting content and responding to comments
(Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Zhang, 2013), something not usually possible in the fast-
paced nature of interactions in face-to-face classes. This lends a sense of safety to online
spaces that makes it easier for them to participate and share their ideas. International
students also expressed that online collaborative learning activities can be a positive
way to work with others from diverse backgrounds, learn from a variety of perspectives,
improve critical thinking and communication, and build their knowledge (Kumi-Yeboah
et al., 2017). Several felt that online collaborative learning activities empowered them
to take on leadership roles, such as group leader, that allowed them to share their
perspectives and cultural backgrounds more freely with others (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017). Another reason that internationals students mentioned, is that they liked having ongoing access to materials and content and could revisit it whenever they needed to (Sadykova & Meskill, 2019). This is a notable contrast to in-person lectures where something can be easily missed. Some international students also expressed appreciation for the ability to provide written responses in online courses, which they feel allows them to better present their ideas and to receive feedback from the instructor and others in writing (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Liu et al., 2010). Lastly, students feel that online collaborative learning activities can be useful in meeting a range of learning needs and communication styles (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017).

In addition to the positive aspects of online learning, researchers have also uncovered a number of ways in which international students have experienced frustrations and challenges in their online courses. Since this study is focused on better serving international students in online courses, I devote considerable attention to summarizing these challenges in the section below, as a way to better understand the needs of this specific population of learners.

**Challenges Encountered in Online Learning**

Researchers have identified numerous areas that present challenges for international students in online courses. These challenges are related to difficulties with language and communication; inadequate structure, guidance and responsiveness on the part of the instructor; unfamiliar approaches to learning and assessment; confusion
about plagiarism; feelings of isolation and invisibility; and lack of representation and relevance of course content and materials.

**Difficulties with Language and Communication**

International students in online courses report encountering a number of difficulties related to language proficiency and other differences that create challenges for speaking, reading, writing, and overall comprehension and communication. Research findings highlight problems including the lack of body language and direct feedback to help clarify and check comprehension; differences in accents; differences in expressions, such as colloquialisms; experiences of being misunderstood or marked down due to differences in Standard American English compared to other forms of English; differences in logic and how to structure an argument; and the amount time required to complete assignments in a non-native language. These challenges can inhibit international student learning, lead to reduced levels of participation, and at times even result in despondency and depression.

The online setting can exacerbate communication and comprehension challenges. Karkar-Esperat (2018) highlighted how the absence of body language cues, especially in asynchronous communication, made it more challenging for international students to grasp what others were saying or meaning. In addition, a lack of immediate feedback also made it impossible for them to check their comprehension or clarify uncertainty. Similarly, participants in a study by Liu et al. (2010) that included students from India, China and Russia enrolled in a U.S. online MBA program, reported that they encountered language barriers online that made it difficult for them to understand.
course content or to clearly communicate their thoughts and questions on course topics. Language barriers were also a factor in some students’ ability to navigate their institution’s Learning Management System (LMS) and access course resources (Yang et al., 2014).

When students feel like they are not sufficiently proficient in English, it can affect their confidence and their willingness to engage actively in an online course. In a study by Karkar-Esperat (2018), online international students from South Korea and Turkey shared that they held back from participating in course activities at times because they felt anxious about their English skills. Similarly, Zhang and Kenny (2010) found that graduate students’ self-consciousness about their language capability frequently held them back from participating or communicating online. One student in that study explained that the use of accurate language was important to them because it was one of the chief means by which they could represent themselves to others in an online space, and so they wanted to do it well. Likewise, a study by Yang et al. (2014) of Chinese and U.S. students in a collaborative online course, observed that some Chinese students were hesitant to express themselves in English due to a lack of confidence, even when they wanted to give an answer or contribute to the discussion.

Even when students are capable and confident in their speaking abilities, they may still face challenges due to barriers created by differences in accents and expressions. Autoethnographic research by Okusolubo (2018) demonstrated how instructors and classmates often had trouble understanding the author due to their Nigerian accent and phrasing. This despite the fact that English is the official language of
Nigeria and that the author’s education prior to coming to the U.S. also took place in English. In a study by Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2017) of perceptions of online collaborative learning activities among minority graduate students from diverse cultural backgrounds including international ones, several participants voiced frustration at not being able to understand or connect with the examples their instructors and classmates used. They also expressed frustration with the failure of their instructors and peers to understand the examples or scenarios they offered. Similarly, participants in a case study by Zhang and Kenny (2010) shared that aspects of course discussions were hard for students to follow due to their lack of familiarity with North American culture and colloquial expressions.

Writing in English can also pose challenges for international students in online courses. International students have experienced being marked down for spelling and grammar differences in their writing, when using formats different than those found in Standard American English (Okusolubo, 2018). The way students structure and express logic and arguments varies by culture. In a study of a collaborative online course, Yang et al. (2014) found that American students first mentioned an idea and then evidence for points they made in discussion posts, whereas Chinese students first listed evidence and then concluded with their idea. These differences can lead to frustrations for international students, who may experience being misunderstood or marked down on written assignments such as research papers, discussion board posts, or discussion board responses.
The sheer volume of reading and writing required in an online class can also be a challenge for international students. Zhang and Kenny (2010) found that the process of reading, digesting, and creating discussion posts took non-native English speakers significantly more time. Participants in the study by Liu et al. (2010) reported that they spent as much as three times more time on a reading assignment as their native-speaking counterparts. Through interviews and focus group discussions with international students from Nigeria, Szilagyi (2013) discovered that students were surprised to have to complete multiple written assignments per week, whereas they were previously used to having written assignments only every few months. Though this study was conducted in the United Kingdom, Nigerian students within the U.S. likely face a similar learning curve. Karkar-Esperat (2018) found that the additional amount of time required of international students to complete readings and develop responses meant they often could only complete the minimum requirements of a course. This need for more time, in turn, led them to feel like they were not contributing to course activities and interactions in meaningful ways. Lack of equal participation led some students to experience depression (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017).

The language abilities that are required in order to be successful in higher education are shaped by the demands of U.S. academic discourse. These demands include expectations around writing and dialectic skills such as how to structure an argument for a research paper or how to engage in Socratic debate. Sadykova and Meskill (2019) pointed out that students and instructors are socialized into academic expectations and behaviors, including the process of academic discourse, over a series
of years and even decades. Making the shift from the values and practices of one culture of academic discourse to another is no easy task. The authors also highlighted that international online students not only face the challenges associated with speaking, writing and meaning making within a new culture and context, but also have to face these challenges in the unique context of an online course. This medium can exacerbate comprehension and communication challenges.

The challenges that international students encounter with writing, speaking and overall comprehension in online courses can inhibit learning (Liu et al., 2010; Zhang and Kenny, 2010) and make them feel that they are not able to participate to the degree that they would like to (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Yang et al., 2014). Language-related challenges are also cognitively demanding and place additional requirements on international students’ time and energy (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Liu et al., 2010; Zhang and Kenny, 2010). Clearly, difficulties related to language and communication are preventing international students from receiving an equitable opportunity to learn from and engage in their online courses.

**Inadequate Structure, Guidance and Responsiveness**

Another set of challenges international students have voiced frustration about is a lack of structure, instructor guidance, and instructor and peer responsiveness in their online courses. These experiences can leave students feeling confused and isolated and like they are not really learning.

International students frequently voice frustration at what they perceive as a lack of preparedness and organization on the part of instructors that translates into
poorly structured online courses. Participants in a study by Karkar-Esperat (2018) complained that the courses were disorganized and critiqued instructors for being unprepared and unresponsive. Similarly, international graduate students in a mixed methods study by Erichsen and Bolliger (2011) also lamented that course instructions and instructor expectations were vague. Students felt that a lack of preparation on the part of instructors led to more reading-heavy courses (Karkar-Esperat, 2018).

Lack of instructor feedback is another frustration experienced by international students. Paralejas (2013) found that students wanted more frequent and timely feedback on assignments so that they could better gauge their progress and assess where they needed to improve. The author also learned that students viewed feedback as a form of acknowledgement and, when it was not received, felt like their contributions were unappreciated (Paralejas, 2013). Students were also exasperated when they would reach out to the instructors for assistance or clarity, and not receive a reply (Karkar-Esperat, 2018). Kang and Chang (2016), in a document analysis of 86 peer reviewed journal articles, ascertained that students from Confucius cultures studying in Western contexts are frequently distressed by a lack of teacher presence or clear structure in online classes. A case study by Smith (2021), which included participants from Brazil, China, El Salvador, Lebanon, Mexico, Spain, South Korea, and Vietnam, indicated that these students also experienced disappointment at a lack of guidance and interaction from instructors and were surprised at the emphasis on self-directed learning in U.S. online courses. Similarly, students from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong in a
study by Zhang (2013) expressed frustration with the lack of instructor participation and guidance in online discussions, leaving them feeling that they were not truly learning. International students also voiced frustration at the unresponsiveness they experienced from their peers. They shared that they often felt like they were interacting only with a computer in their online courses rather than with other learners and expressed feelings of disappointment and isolation (Karkar-Esperat’s, 2018). Respondents in Karkar-Esperat’s (2018) study shared that when they reached out to their peers for assistance or clarity on assignments, they were often met with silence (Karkar-Esperat’s, 2018). Erichsen and Bolliger (2011) found that international students felt that the nature of online learning made it harder to connect with other students and develop friendships. This is unfortunate, since research has shown that peer support can play a crucial role in the success of international students (Sadykova & Meskill, 2019). For example, Zhang (2013) found that international students were often more comfortable approaching their peers for assistance rather than their instructors. Research indicates that international students experience a variety of challenges related to inadequate structure, guidance and responsiveness in their online courses. A lack of structure can lead to disorganized or reading-heavy courses. A lack of instructor feedback, presence and responsiveness can result in student confusion. A lack of responsiveness from peers can leave students feeling isolated. These challenges can make it hard for international students to know what was expected of them, may decrease their motivation to engage with and participate in the course, and can result in reduced learning and overall satisfaction.
Unfamiliar Approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment

A third set of challenges researchers have uncovered is related to differences international students experience in U.S. approaches to teaching, learning and assessment compared to ones from their native context. Many of the online courses offered at U.S. tertiary institutions are based on philosophical and pedagogical approaches that are grounded in values such as independence, self-advocacy, critical thinking, inquiry and constructivism (Chan, 2010; Harasim, 2017). Students whose cultures are anchored in values that differ from these may encounter challenges in their online learning experiences.

Constructivism, which is the belief that knowledge takes shape over the course of time through a process of social interaction and negotiation between teachers and students (Kang & Chang, 2016), is currently a dominant epistemology within U.S. higher education. Based on this mindset, instructors generally expose students to a variety of sources and perspectives on course content and assess them on their ability to apply independent reasoning skills in solving a problem or determining an answer. Self-direction and individual responsibility are considered important and effective learning behaviors, and things like active learning, dialogue, questions, and challenging ones instructor and peers are seen as valuable learning tasks.

Researchers found that international students are often unfamiliar or uncomfortable when constructivist tasks are required of them. Liu et al. (2010) and Sadykova and Meskill (2019) found that international students in their studies were more accustomed to teacher-centric approaches to learning, such as lecturing, and less
used to active or interactive methods. Kang and Chang (2016) discovered that their participants preferred lectures, learning activities and assignments that were straightforward and structured around textbook content instead of activities that might be deemed more creative or fun, but which they saw as irrelevant to learning. Nigerian students in Szilagyí’s (2013) study shared that values such as active participation in discussions, sharing their own viewpoint, and critical thinking, were not a part of their previous academic experience. Okusolubo (2018) concurred, noting that although critical thinking is valued in U.S. higher education, it was not something that was considered important in their native Nigerian context.

The constructivist penchant for questioning and debate can also be uncomfortable for those not accustomed to it. Kang and Chang (2016) found that students from Confucist-influenced societies such as mainland China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Singapore, among others, saw teachers as authority figures whom they were not comfortable challenging. Similarly, in comparing her experience in a Chinese classroom to that in her American online course, the informant in Sadykova and Meskill’s (2019) case study recounted that teaching in China was more teacher-centric and discouraged questions and comments from students. Several respondents in the study by Zhang and Kenny (2013) stated that in their educational experiences prior to coming to the U.S., they did not feel the need to respond when they agreed with someone nor did they feel the need to vocalize opposition when they disagreed with someone.
Within a U.S. context, disagreement and debate are seen as important ways to foster critical thinking and innovation. Challenging the instructor and fellow peers is often considered a vital part of student learning. However, researchers found that many international students are more accustomed to contexts in which harmony and respect are valued. Liu et al. (2010) noted that students from China, India and Russia perceived US students to be more competitive, independent and more comfortable expressing their opinions and desires, whereas they themselves preferred working in teams and were focused on maintaining harmony. In their study comparing American and Chinese students in a collaborative online course, Yang et al. (2014) found that American students tended to be task focused and expressed their opinions openly, even when their ideas differed from others. Chinese students, on the other hand, tended to be focused on relationship maintenance and were likely to indirectly express disagreement to avoid conflict. Similarly, Chinese respondents in the study by Zhang (2013) shared that they tried to remain neutral in their online responses, especially when it came to controversial topics.

Kang and Chang (2016) determined that the hesitancy on the part of some international students to participate in discussion and debate was not simply that they were unaccustomed to it, but also because they questioned its effectiveness as a learning practice. For example, the researchers found that some international students believed that the act of asking questions is disruptive because it puts the needs of an individual student above those of the larger group. Researchers also found that some international students did not share the constructivist view that knowledge is co-
constructed through a process of social interaction and negotiation, and instead firmly believed that knowledge is acquired from authoritative sources (Kang & Chang, 2016; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019; Szilagyi, 2013). These students were likely to consider attentive listening and memorization to be effective learning activities (Kang & Chang, 2016).

In addition to unfamiliar approaches to teaching and learning some international students report encountering assessment processes that are different from what they were used to in their home countries (Liu et al. 2010; Okusolubo, 2018; Smith, 2021). For example, Okusolubo (2018) observed that frequent multiple-choice quizzes, short essay tests, and online discussion board participation dominate the U.S. grading process, compared to the large end of semester exams of many other countries. In addition, students in a U.S. system are often evaluated on their ability to apply independent reasoning skills and to synthesize a variety of sources and perspectives on course topics. Many international students shared being used to being assessed on their ability to recall and reiterate content as presented by the instructor (Sadykova & Meskill, 2019). When international students are assessed on their learning using strategies that they are unfamiliar with, they may not perform as well as they would like.

The dominant epistemology guiding higher education learning in the U.S. is constructivism, which values independent reasoning, self-direction and active learning tasks such as dialogue, questions, and challenging instructors and peers. However, international students may come from educational backgrounds shaped by other value
systems and therefore hold that knowledge is acquired from more knowledgeable others and that instructors are authority figures who should not be challenged. As a result, international students may appreciate direct instruction such as lectures over activities that are constructive or creative and value harmony over debate. International students may also be more familiar with being assessed on their ability to recall and reiterate information rather than to apply independent reasoning. All of this means that international students may struggle—at least initially—in adjusting to new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in U.S. online courses.

**Confusion about Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Many international students are unprepared for the rigorous rules of referencing in U.S. higher education (Liu et al., 2010; Szilagyi, 2013). This has led to wide-spread concerns about plagiarism among institutions and instructors (Haitch, 2016; Bertram Gallant et al., 2015). While instructors frequently assume a view of plagiarism as intentional cheating, there is evidence to suggest that for some students it is a matter of not understanding the value placed on proper attribution within the culture of U.S. academia.

In a study about Nigerian students’ perceptions on academic integrity in online postgraduate programs, Szilagyi (2013) discovered that many participants in their study had come of age within a system that endorsed memorization and reiteration of course content as an indication of mastery. In their Nigerian context, students demonstrated knowledge and expertise by reiterating information they had been taught. Referencing their sources was not required. Although this study was conducted in the United
Kingdom, it no doubt parallels the experience of many Nigerian and other international students in the U.S.. In many Western academic contexts such as the U.S. and U.K., ethics and etiquette require citing one’s sources. This practice is seen as an important way for students and scholars to demonstrate how they have arrived at a conclusion and to give credit to others for their ideas.

International students may not initially understand the value placed on proper citation within U.S. academics. Even once they have understood its importance—which Szilagyi (2013) discovered often did not happen until they received an official warning or had been penalized for it—students often lacked the skill to do citations in the specific and exacting ways required (such as APA, MLA, etc.). For some students in Szilagyi’s (2013) study, the difficulties associated with citations and plagiarism was not a challenge they had anticipated. The official censures they received felt demoralizing, and in some cases nearly caused them to drop out of their programs. Participants in a study by Liu et al. (2010) also felt that instructors were too harsh and insensitive when it came to addressing plagiarism. For many international students, it took several terms until they felt that they had adequately learned the skills required for citation (Szilagyi, 2013).

Ethics and etiquette in U.S. academic culture require that students and scholars refrain from copying the words and ideas of others and to follow a careful process for citation when they do. International students may initially be unaware of this strict code of conduct or the deep values associated with it. Furthermore, once aware, it may take some time for students to fully learn the citation process. In the interim, students may
experience frustration and embarrassment at being penalized for engaging in plagiarism.

**Feelings of Isolation and Invisibility**

Researchers have found that another challenge international students encounter in online courses is that they often feel misunderstood, isolated and ignored (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esperat, 2018). These feelings affect their sense of belonging as well as their ability to engage with others, which can subsequently affect their academic success. Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) confirmed that success in online learning hinges on relationships between students and their instructors, the course content, and their peers. When these relationships are thriving, students feel like their online learning experience is engaging and rewarding. When these relationships are not thriving, students feel detached from their online experience and are less likely to persist.

Okusolubo (2018), in an autoethnographic study, shared feeling frequently misunderstood along with painful experiences of racism and microaggressions—such as being called names or others assuming they could speak English since they were African. These, in turn, led to feelings of isolation. International students in a study by Karkar-Esparat (2018) also reported experiencing feelings of isolation. They shared that the workload and the amount of time required by assignments prevented them from contributing more meaningfully to a course and connecting with others. Differences in time zones also prevented some international students from participating in synchronous aspects of the course, thereby limiting their ability to connect with others.
(Zhang and Kenny, 2010). In addition, the fact that many programs allow students flexibility in course selection means that students’ classmates vary from term to term. Crosta et al. (2016) found that a lack of sustained and repeated engagement in online courses made it more difficult for international students to get to know other students well.

It is worth noting that feelings of isolation among international students seemed to vary based on a student’s continent of origin. In a mixed-methods study involving 54 students from 24 countries who were studying in the U.S., Erichsen and Bolliger (2011) found that students from Asia were more likely than others to feel invisible and that their intelligence and level of effort were not acknowledged by instructors and peers, and that their input was less valued. Students from Europe, on the other hand, generally expressed that they felt their input was valued. They also expressed that they felt comfortable approaching faculty, believed that their cultural background was valued, and felt adequately supported by their instructors. More research is needed in order to understand the cause and implications of this difference. However, it seems to indicate that students are either receiving or requiring more support based on their nationality or cultural background.

Feelings of isolation and invisibility among international students can be exacerbated by a reluctance to reach out and ask for help. A study by Zhang (2013) found that international students hesitated to reach out to instructors, for fear of inadvertently offending them. Findings from this study indicated that students were often more inclined to reach out to someone with the same or similar language and
cultural backgrounds as theirs when they were in need of assistance. This tendency, no doubt, limits the likelihood of them making a broad network of connections that could help to deepen their sense of belonging. Zhang and Kenny (2010) observed that international students were also less likely to socialize in class, which could lead to greater feelings of being alone.

Factors such as course workload, differing time zones, and rotating classmates contribute towards feelings of isolation and invisibility among international students, as do experiences of microaggression and outright discrimination. A pattern of reluctance to reach out and ask for help is another element that limits their interaction with others. Interestingly, Asian international students reported feeling more alone and unsupported in their online courses than their counterparts from Europe. Nevertheless, there is compelling evidence that, overall, international students in online courses feel intensely alone. This likely affects not only their sense of belonging but also their ability to effectively engage and learn.

Lack of Representation and Relevance

International students have commented on the lack of multicultural perspectives in their courses, and how this makes it challenging for them to connect with the content. Undergraduate students from diverse cultural backgrounds who participated in a study by Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020b) voiced concern over the Euro-centrism of, and limited cultural diversity, the curriculum and materials of their online courses. Many students felt that this lack of representation made it hard for them to relate to course content, which impacted their overall experience and learning in the course. A different
study by Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2017) found similar responses among graduate students. For them, too, the lack of representation and relatable examples resulted in a struggle to understand the course content and its relevance to their lives and experiences.

Students in the study by Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2017) also shared that the experiences of being unable to connect course content to their lived experience exacerbated their feelings of marginalization and isolation in their online courses. They felt like their comments and contributions often went misunderstood or ignored by the larger group due to a lack of understanding and appreciation for multicultural perspectives.

The lack of diverse perspectives and representation in the content of many online courses can make it challenging for international students to connect the material to their lives and can cause them to question the relevance of what they are learning. It can also make it harder for them to feel like they are able to contribute to discussions and projects in meaningful ways, and make domestic students in their classes less likely to recognize them for their contributions. In short, the absence of multicultural points of view can damage the learning experiences of students within a course as well as the overall integrity of course content.

The Cultural Nature of Student Challenges

Researchers have identified a variety of barriers that international students encounter in their online courses, including difficulties with language and communication; inadequate structure, guidance and responsiveness on the part of the instructor; unfamiliar approaches to learning and assessment; confusion about plagiarism; feelings of isolation and invisibility; and lack of representation in, and
relevance of, course content and materials. It is critical to note that at the root of most of these challenges are cultural differences. Recall that culture is the shared standards, beliefs and practices that allow groups to attribute meaning to behavior and symbols, interpret what others are doing and saying, and judge that behavior as acceptable or unacceptable (Goodenough, 1957). Recall, too, that according to sociocultural theory, cultural experiences profoundly shape how people think along with functions such as memory, reasoning and problem solving (Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995). Therefore, aspects related to expectations, communication, interpretation, and meaning-making in higher education—as so many of the challenges identified in the literature are—are cultural in nature.

In addition to differences in cultures between individual instructors and students, U.S. academia also has a unique culture. Higher education institutions are intricately interwoven with the cultures that create and utilize them. Everything from how their systems are structured, how people act and interact, to what disciplines are taught and how they are taught are informed by cultural values and norms of the dominant culture surrounding them. Yet because cultural values and behaviors are often beyond people’s conscious awareness, instructors may not be aware that the behaviors and beliefs they think of as normal and appropriate within the system they are used to are matters of culture until they encounter students whose culture—and whose idea of normal and appropriate—are different from theirs (Lo Bianco, 2003). Sadykova and Meskill (2019) pointed out that students and instructors are socialized into academic expectations and behaviors, including the process of academic discourse,
over a series of years and even decades. For international students, making the shift from the values and practices of one culture of academic discourse to another is no easy task.

Table 1 delineates what it looks like when the difficulties international students encounter in online courses are seen through a lens of cultural difference. Sorting the challenges in this way brings into focus the fact that the majority of these challenges have their roots in cultural differences, rather than in any shortcomings or failures on the part of students or instructors. This recognition of the pivotal role culture plays also has implications for how the challenges can be addressed and resolved. All too often, the response is blame and shame. Instructors are labeled as ineffective teachers and/or students are subjected to remediation and expected to simply assimilate (Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Haan et al., 2017; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). However, this form of response only leads to greater frustration, self-doubt, and delayed program completion or attrition by students (Heitner & Jennings, 2016). Instead, challenges that are cultural in nature need to be addressed with greater cultural understanding, cultural competence, and cultural inclusion.

### Table 1

**International Student Challenges Through the Lens of Cultural Difference**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges Related to Cross-Cultural Interactions, Communication &amp; Support</th>
<th>Challenges Related to the Cultural Nature of Teaching &amp; Learning</th>
<th>Challenges Related to the Nature of Online learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence in language abilities leads to reduced participation (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Yang)</td>
<td>Inability to connect with content and examples because of cultural references (Kumi-Yeboah)</td>
<td>Lack of body language and direct feedback to help clarify and/or check comprehension and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
et al., 2014; Zhang & Kenny, 2010)

- Inability to understand others or be understood due to accents and forms of expression (e.g. colloquialisms) (Liu et al., 2010; Okusolubo, 2018)

- Spending 2-3 times more time on reading & writing assignments as native speakers (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Liu et al., 2010; Szilagyi, 2013; Zhang & Kenny, 2010)

- Lack of peer responsiveness that leads to reduced learning and feelings of isolation (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esperat, 2018)

- View teachers as authority figures who should not to be challenged (Kang & Chang, 2016; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019)

- Failure to connect meaningfully with other students due to workload, differences in time zones, or changing classmates (Crosta et al., 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Zhang & Kenny, 2010)

- Reluctance to reach out to others (Zhang, 2013; Zhang & Kenny, 2010)

- Experiences of being misunderstood, microaggressions and racism (Okusolubo, 2018)

- Lack of understanding and appreciation for multicultural perspectives on the part of instructor and domestic students (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017)

- Being misunderstood or marked down due to differences between home and host culture in writing conventions (e.g. how to structure an argument) or English language conventions (e.g. Standard American English vs other forms of English) (Okusolubo, 2018)

- Differing epistemologies, e.g. that knowledge is acquired from authoritative sources rather than constructed in collaboration with others (Kang & Chang, 2016; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019; Szilagyi, 2013)

- Preference for lectures & direct instruction rather than discussion-based or interactive learning (Kang & Chang, 2016; Liu et al., 2010; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019)

- Uncomfortable with debate, questioning, critical reasoning or expressing own opinions (Liu et al., 2010; Okusolubo, 2018; Zhang, 2013)

- Unfamiliar assessment strategies such as ongoing smaller assessments (vs. one final exam) or being assessed on independent reasoning (vs. ability to recall and reiterate) (Liu et al. 2010; Okusolubo, 2018; Smith, 2021)

- Complicated citation process that takes time to learn (Szilagyi, 2013)

- Inadequate structure and clarity within courses, which results in disorganized or reading-heavy courses (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esperat, 2018)

- Lack of instructor feedback, responsiveness and presence results in confusion and an inability to gauge progress (Kang & Chang, 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Smith 2021; Zhang, 2013)
Research on Instructor Experiences in Teaching International Students Online

Although there is a growing body of research exploring the experiences of international students in U.S. online classes, there is a dearth of research looking into the experiences of instructors who teach international students online (Cao et al., 2014). My review of the related literature uncovered no research studies that directly investigated instructor experiences, although there are some theoretical articles discussing the role of faculty in cross-cultural online learning spaces (Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009; Starr-Glass, 2019). There are, however, a handful of empirical studies that explore related issues that fall into two groups: one set that explores faculty perspectives on teaching international students, but is not specific to online environments (Cao et al., 2014; Haan et al., 2017; Jin & Schneider, 2019; Mahalingappa et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2013; Tavares, 2021; Yeh et al., 2021); and one set that explores cultural diversity in online environments, though not specific to international students (Heitner & Jennings, 2016; Kumi-Yeboah, 2018; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a). By combining a review of these sets of related literature, I was able to create a composite
to better understand instructor experiences of teaching international students in online courses.

**Challenges Encountered in Teaching International Students Online**

The research exploring faculty experiences of teaching international students in online courses is limited. One reason for this gap may be related to a phenomenon uncovered in a study by Jin and Schneider (2019). When the researchers asked faculty participants in their study to identify what specific difficulties they or other instructors encountered in teaching international students, the participants overwhelmingly pointed out student—rather than instructor—challenges. This in spite of having already been asked to name student challenges in a previous question (Jin & Schneider, 2019). For example, respondents identified student language proficiency—rather than an instructor’s ability to effectively engage across language barriers—as challenging. Jin and Schneider (2019) noted that this pattern of response by faculty seems to imply that they do not see themselves as implicated in these challenges in any way: “Implicit in this view”, the researchers stated, “is the belief that faculty themselves do not have limitations” (p. 95). Presumably as well, then, instructors are less likely to take responsibility in resolving challenges since they perceive them to belong to someone else. Unless it is addressed, this attitude is likely to hamper equity and inclusion initiatives.

My review of the literature did yield a few insights into some of the challenges instructors encounter in teaching international students, however. These challenges can be grouped into the following three categories: a) difficulties with language and
communication; b) differences between themselves and international students in
expectations related to guidance, teaching, plagiarism and social interactions; and c)
failure to design content that is representative of and relevant to a multicultural
audience. Each of these areas is briefly touched on below.

**Difficulties with Language and Communication**

Instructors in several studies mentioned language barriers as a common problem
that they encountered in working with international students (Jin & Schneider, 2019;
Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2018; Nguyen, 2013). In a qualitative study investigating the
challenges of 40 online instructors in designing a cross-cultural collaborative online
learning framework, Kumi-Yeboah (2018) discovered that language barriers presented
one of the key challenges instructors experienced. Faculty in a study by Jin and
Schneider (2019) mentioned trouble understanding students with accents as an
example of a specific barrier they encountered. Faculty in a qualitative study by Nguyen
(2013) that explored the experiences of eight faculty advisors working with international
graduate students, mentioned student struggles with writing. This latter finding falls
into the phenomenon noticed by Jin and Schneider (2019), where faculty identify
problems as lying with their students rather than themselves. It is perhaps safe to
assume from this response, though, that instructors struggle in knowing how to respond
to students’ struggles with writing. This assertion is supported with a finding from
another study, where instructors voiced that they were unsure how to grade written
assignments or presentations fairly, especially in relation to the work of native English
speakers (Jin and Schneider, 2019).
**Differences in Expectations related to Guidance, Teaching, Academic Integrity and Interactions**

A few research studies identified challenges related to differences between instructor and international students' expectations around guidance, teaching, and plagiarism. Jin and Schneider (2019) found that some faculty members experienced trouble with how to explain assignments clearly to international students. In this same study, instructors also commented that they often felt uncertain on how to effectively engage international students in class activities. Findings by Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2018) highlighted that asynchronous formats can make it especially challenging for instructors to attend to diverse learner needs. Instructors also felt challenged by what they perceived as international students’ reluctance to articulate their needs and hesitancy to seek help for fear of imposing on the instructors’ time (Jin & Schneider, 2019; Nguyen, 2013). Lastly, some instructors named plagiarism a problem (Nguyen, 2013).

**Failure to Design Representative and Relevant Content**

A few studies described instructor difficulties in designing content that is representative of and relevant to a multicultural audience. Instructors in two separate studies (Kumi-Yeboah et al. 2018; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a) mentioned that a significant challenge they faced in making content more culturally relevant to their students, was how to identify students' cultural backgrounds in the online setting. Instructors shared that they wanted to be careful to not stereotype students. Some also shared that even when they did diversify their content, it did not always lead to greater student participation. Overall, instructors felt like they lacked experience in how to
adequately address cultural diversity online and felt deficient in instructional strategies to incorporate multicultural resources and content (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020).

Due to a lack of scholarship exploring challenges that instructors encounter when teaching international students in online courses, I turned to research that investigated instructor experiences teaching diverse — though not necessarily international — students online as well as research that investigated instructor experiences teaching international students in face-to-face settings. This allowed me to identify some of the challenges instructors face, which include difficulties with language and communication; differences between themselves and international students in expectations related to guidance, teaching, plagiarism and social interactions; and uncertainty about how to design content that is representative of and relevant to a multicultural audience. A possible reason for the lack of information on instructor challenges is that instructors may attribute problems encountered in online learning to the shortcomings on the part of international students, rather than recognizing that they themselves may bear some responsibility for them (Jin & Schneider, 2019).

**Instructor Attitudes Towards Teaching International Students**

Researchers have identified both positive and negative views about internationalization and cultural diversity among instructors. This is important because instructors’ perceptions about internationalization and cultural diversity infuse their teaching of, and interactions with, international students (Cao et al., 2014). While some instructors appreciate international students for their global perspectives, multilingualism, and work ethic, others hold the idea that international students create
more work for them and force them to lower their standards. Researchers have also identified concern on the part of instructors about their ability to adequately support international students academically (Jin & Schneider, 2019).

Instructors’ positive perceptions of international students and internationalization were evident in several studies (Haan et al., 2017; Jin & Schneider, 2019; Mahalingappa et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2013). In a quantitative study to assess the beliefs, attitudes and actions of 192 instructors at a mid-size university in the U.S. towards emergent multilinguals, Haan et al. (2017) found that faculty generally displayed a positive view towards the idea of internationalization. Mahalingappa et al. (2021) also found that 24 faculty members in their study, representing 11 separate institutions, had supportive and thoughtful dispositions towards linguistically diverse international students. Similarly, Jin and Schneider (2019) found that the majority of faculty in their study had a positive orientation towards international students. In particular, instructors at their research site—a private university in the Midwest—expressed appreciation for international students’ diverse perspectives, the global lenses that they contributed to class, their multilingualism, and their strong academic performance. Nguyen (2013) found similarly positive results in qualitative research that explored the experiences of eight faculty advisors working with international graduate students at a large Southern university. Participants in the study lauded international students for having a strong work ethic and being respectful in their interactions with faculty and others.
However, not all instructors approach internationalization and cultural diversity with a purely optimistic outlook. While the study by Haan et al. (2014) revealed that faculty generally displayed a positive view towards the idea of internationalization, many instructors also expressed negative attitudes in terms of how it affected their work load. Over a third of respondents disagreed with the statement that “using instructional techniques for international students benefits all students” (p. 43), with many suggesting that adapting their approach would mean lowering the standards of their course. Others reiterated the belief that support for international students should not rest on faculty members but was the responsibility of the broader university. For some, this meant stricter admission requirements or external remediation services in order for students to be successful in their courses without additional pressure on instructors.

Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020a) found that an instructors’ academic discipline tended to affect their perceptions of cultural diversity. In a study exploring the perceptions, challenges and pedagogical strategies of 50 full-time instructors in addressing cultural diversity in online classes at three different universities, the researchers found that instructors from disciplines within education, engineering and the social sciences indicated a better understanding of cultural diversity and a sense of responsibility in supporting students from diverse backgrounds than their colleagues within the physical sciences (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020). Those who took an active stance in supporting cultural diversity within their online courses utilized a variety of different instructional strategies to do so, including creating a safe and welcoming space; encouraging
collaboration; using global examples; integrating cultural awareness activities; and actively attending to differences in student needs. However, despite some of these positive examples many instructors felt inadequate in their abilities to effectively address cultural diversity in their online courses.

Research by Cao et al. (2014) showed that faculty perceptions of internationalization and international students influences their behavior in the classroom and, ultimately, international student success. In a quantitative study involving 417 faculty members from two universities, the researchers demonstrated that faculty were more likely to use teaching practices that support and guide international students when the following three factors were present: they believed internationalization was important; they felt a sense of responsibility towards international students; and they felt prepared to and capable to meet the needs of international students. Cao et al. (2014) found that when faculty members took action to support international students, it improved students’ academic performance, which led to improved faculty satisfaction with internationalization of higher education.

Many instructors have positive perceptions of international students and appreciate them for their global perspectives, multilingualism, and work ethic. Other instructors, however, think international students create more work for them and require them to lower their standards. Academic discipline seems to have an influence on instructor attitudes, with those from education, engineering and the social sciences displaying a better understanding of cultural diversity and a greater sense of responsibility in supporting students from diverse backgrounds (Kumi-Yeboah et al.,
In addition, instructors who support the ideals of internationalization, feel a sense of responsibility towards students, and who feel adequately equipped to help are more likely to take action in support of international students.

**Need for Greater Faculty Support in Teaching International Students Online**

Cao et al. (2014) demonstrated that positive perceptions of international students alone are not enough to motivate faculty members to make changes in their approaches to teaching. Instructors also need to feel a sense of responsibility towards helping international students achieve academic success as well as a sense of competence in their ability to do so.

Unfortunately, many instructors express a low opinion of their ability to teach international students effectively (Haan et al., 2017; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a; Mahalingappa et al., 2021). In a study by Haan et al. (2017), over half of the 192 respondents indicated negative or neutral responses when asked about their confidence in successfully teaching international students. Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020a), in their study of 50 full-time instructors of online courses, concluded that many of them “lacked the requisite pedagogical skills to design an inclusive instructional activity to help diverse students succeed in online learning” (p. 31). Similarly, faculty members in a study by Mahalingappa et al. (2021) shared that they felt they lacked the necessary knowledge and skills about linguistically diverse international students and expressed an interest in further training in areas such as linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy.
Several researchers found that instructors wished that their institutions would do more to support them in teaching international students (Cao et al., 2014; Hann et al., 2017; Mahalingappa et al., 2021). Hann et al. (2017) noted that the majority of faculty respondents in their study did not feel that their campus was providing enough support in the face of a growing population of multilingual learners. Although Mahalingappa et al. (2021) ascertained that some of the 11 institutions represented by faculty in their study had access to workshops to support them in working with linguistically diverse international students through their centers for teaching and learning, other faculty members offered mixed reviews about the level of support provided to them. The authors also noted a general lack of any guiding policies to support linguistically diverse international students in higher education (Mahalingappa et al., 2021). Cao et al. (2014) found that, in addition to attitude, another factor influencing faculty readiness to support international students was access to timely and strategic resources.

Institutional strategies that set a precedent for and support international student success are important yet, as Sadykova and Dauterman (2009) pointed out, the quality of any given course and a students’ experience in it ultimately rests on the instructor and the mix of students within the class. Providing instructors with professional development opportunities can be an effective means for increasing instructors’ abilities and confidence in teaching international students effectively and equitably. Yeh et al. (2021) used a mixed-method approach to measure the impact of a cultural awareness professional development program on 10 faculty members three years after they
completed it. Among the key takeaways from the program that faculty mentioned was that they realized that they had held preconceived opinions about culturally diverse students in their classes. They shared that, post-training, they no longer operated with the presumption that students shared their same beliefs around teaching and learning and made an effort to explain their choices and expectations to students. Participants also mentioned that following the training they recognized the importance of incorporating intercultural communication and cultural responsiveness into their approach and content (Yeh et al., 2021). However, they noted that it took additional time and opportunities, apart from the one-semester course, for them to develop and hone cultural awareness and culturally responsive practices.

Instructors have voiced a need for greater support to help them adapt their teaching to the increasing cultural diversity among students. While some of this support should take the form of institutional policies and structures that directly support international students, providing instructors training and professional development opportunities to improve their cultural competence and help them develop culturally inclusive teaching practices is vital. Because instructors are generally not trained teachers, since doctoral programs rarely equip graduates in the areas of pedagogy and instructional methodologies, they commonly fall back on their own student experiences to serve as a model for instruction (Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009). This approach is woefully inadequate when it comes to meeting the needs of today’s online global learners.
Research on Recommended Practices for Equity and Inclusion Online

My review of the literature exploring the experiences of international students and their instructors in online courses identified challenges encountered by the different parties, along with numerous steps instructors could take to mitigate the challenges. These constitute research-based practice recommendations, i.e. ideas researchers have proposed to address specific problems identified in their research. Since my study is focused on improving the experience of international students in online courses, I summarize these recommended practices below.

Recommended Practices

In the literature on international students' experiences with online learning that I reviewed above, researchers identified several barriers students face. These included difficulties with language and communication; inadequate structure, guidance and responsiveness on the part of the instructor; unfamiliar approaches to learning and assessment; confusion about plagiarism; feelings of isolation and invisibility; and lack of representation in, and relevance of, course content and materials. Based on their findings, researchers made numerous suggestions for ways that instructors could address and mitigate the challenges. Their recommendations—which included ideas for how to address language challenges and communication difficulties; provide clear and thoughtful structures for their online courses; ease students into unfamiliar approaches to teaching, learning and assessment; mitigate student feelings of isolation and invisibility; and ensure the relevance of course content and materials—are detailed below.
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<th><strong>Table 2</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Research-based Practice Recommendations for Improving International Student Success in Online Courses</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Address Language and Communication Difficulties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Monitor and moderate pace of speaking (Kung, 2017; Mahalingappa et al., 2021)</td>
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<td>• Give students access to class materials prior to class (Paralejas, 2013)</td>
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<td>• Use audio and visual aids and diverse activities (Liu et al., 2010)</td>
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<td>• <a href="#">Incorporate electronic nonverbal cues (such as punctuation, illustrations, pictures, graphics, emojis, etc.) (Al Tawil, 2019)</a></td>
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<td>• Explaining acronyms (Mahalingappa et al., 2021)</td>
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<td>• Use small groups to encourage discussion (Mahalingappa et al., 2021)</td>
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<td>• Ask students to write their responses and read them out loud (Mahalingappa et al., 2021)</td>
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<td>• Make bilingual language resources available when possible (Yang et al., 2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Provide Clear and Adequate Structure</strong></td>
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<td>• Articulate course goals and topics (Karkar-Esperat, 2018)</td>
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<td>• Articulate guidelines for acceptable participation (Karkar-Esperat, 2018)</td>
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<td>• State expectations clearly to avoid ambiguity (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Kung, 2017; Zhang, 2013)</td>
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<td>• Provide clear and detailed instructions for assignments (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Kung, 2017)</td>
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<td>• Scaffold content to allow students to progressively develop proficiency in the skills they need to succeed in the course (Kung, 2017; Sadykova &amp; Meskill, 2019)</td>
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<td>• Provide a clearly structured syllabi for the course and lesson agendas prior to each class (Paralejas, 2013)</td>
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<td>• Distribute course materials well in advance of the class to allow time for reviewing and processing (Liu et al., 2010)</td>
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<td>• Negotiate assignment structure and firmness or flexibility of deadlines with students on a course-by-course basis (Paralejas, 2013; Sadykova &amp; Meskill, 2019).</td>
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<td><strong>Be Proactive and Responsive</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide more frequent and timely feedback on assignments and discussion board posts (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Mahalingappa et al., 2021; Paralejas, 2013; Sadykova &amp; Meskill, 2019).</td>
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<td>• Consider offering seminars or workshops to orient students to U.S. academic culture and online learning (Erichsen &amp; Bolliger, 2011; Kung, 2017; Liu et al., 2010).</td>
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<td>• Create opportunities for students to connect with one another, especially at the outset of course (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020b; Kung, 2017; Sadykova, 2014).</td>
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<td>• Make themselves available after class for questions (Mahalingappa et al., 2021).</td>
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<td><strong>Ease Students into Unfamiliar Approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Conduct a brief learner assessment at the outset of a course to better understand student background and expectations (Liu et al., 2010).</td>
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<td>• Utilize a variety of approaches, modalities and digital tools for teaching and learning and provide a rationale for the ones chosen (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020b; Kung, 2017).</td>
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<td>• Use group work and collaborative assignments as a tool for learning and a way to build student connections (Erichsen &amp; Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esparat, 2018; Kung, 2017; Sadykova, 2014; Zhang, 2013).</td>
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• Provide take-home exams to allow students more time to complete them (Mahalingappa et al., 2021).
• [Give students guidance in how to structure group work, including how to assign group member roles — need to find source].

Mitigate Feelings of Isolation and Invisibility
• Take initiative to communicate and connect with international students (Nguyen, 2013; Zhang, 2013).
• Be available for student questions at a variety of times and places (Mahalingappa et al., 2021).
• Be actively and present in online discussions (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Zhang, 2013).

Ensure Relevance and Inclusion
• Incorporate diverse examples, comparative perspectives and a range of case studies into course content and activities (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017; Kung, 2017).
• Avoid stereotyping (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020b; Kung, 2017; Morong & DesBiens, 2016).
• Pursue further training to increase your own cultural awareness and cultural competence (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a; Kung, 2017; Liu et al., 2010; Morong & DesBiens, 2016; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).
• Invite international students to share how course topics relate to their culture or context, yet use caution in doing so (Kung, 2017; Saunders and Karida, 2011; Yeh et al., 2021).

Address Language and Communication Difficulties

Language barriers related to speaking, writing, reading and comprehension were one of the primary issues encountered by international students in U.S. online classes (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2010; Okusolubo, 2018; Szilagyı, 2013; Yang et al., 2014; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). Mahalingappa et al. (2021) found that faculty in their study used a variety of pedagogical techniques to specifically address the oral communication issues for linguistically diverse international students. These included techniques like allowing students to make audio recordings of lectures and discussions; regulating their pace of speech and slowing down when needed; explaining acronyms; using small groups to encourage discussion; and asking students to write their responses and read them out loud. Kung (2017) also suggested that instructors pay attention to how fast they are speaking during synchronous sessions and moderate their pace so that students who are less fluent can more easily follow along.
Liu et al. (2010) recommended that instructors use audio and visual aids and diverse activities to help students bridge language challenges. To assist students to better comprehend course content, Paralejas (2013) suggested that instructors provide students access to course materials prior to class so that they have adequate time to review and digest it. Mahalingappa et al. (2021) found that offering students optional supplementary readings was another way to help them comprehend the material. These four recommendations are simple yet effective remedies that require minimal work on the part of an instructor.

A less feasible recommendation by Yang et al. (2014) was to make bilingual language resources available when possible. This suggestion is likely only doable when the course is a collaborative online international learning experience specifically designed for students located in no more than two to three different countries. For the instructor of a typical online course in Higher Education, however, it would be impossible to provide resources for the multitude of languages spoken by international students in their class. Another questionable recommendation stemmed from Zhang and Kenny (2010) who suggested that institutions raise the admission requirements for English language proficiency of international students. The authors felt that having more language fluency would help learners better navigate online learning spaces, which tend to lack the non-verbal cues and body language that non-native speakers often rely on to aid their comprehension. This is an unhelpful suggestion. The majority of U.S. universities and colleges have existing English language proficiency requirements for admission of non-native English speakers. To simply recommend that they raise them is
too simplistic. It is also not clear that greater fluency in the language translates to less of a need for body language cues. In fact, it is likely that even native-language speakers rely on non-verbal cues in communication. A more appropriate suggestion would have been for instructors to consider how to integrate a greater degree of electronic nonverbal cues (eNVC) into their course design and communications. eNVCs that offer alternate ways for instructors to communicate attitude, emotion, and intent include, among others: text layout; font and color choices; punctuation; illustrations, pictures, graphics and emojis; frequency of communication; and modeling desired behavior (Al Tawil, 2019).

Research suggests that by making a few simple changes to their practice, instructors can alleviate some of the challenges international students encounter related to language barriers. These changes include moderating their speech pace, incorporating audio and visual aids and diverse learning activities, and providing students access to course materials prior to class so that they have adequate time to review it.

**Provide Clear and Adequate Structure**

Researchers report that international students encounter a number of challenges related to a perceived lack of structure and organization within their online courses (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Kang & Chang, 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019; Smith, 2021; Zhang, 2013). Although instructors did not voice the same level of concern as students did in this area, student comments lead us to surmise that some of the areas instructors struggle with include clearly articulating course objectives,
expectations and assignments; organizing course content so that it is scaffolded effectively; and making course material available to students sufficiently in advance of class. Numerous studies provided recommendations for how instructors could improve course structure and communication to benefit international students.

To help create more order and structure in an online course, Karkar-Esperat (2018) recommended that instructors articulate course goals and topics, provide detailed instructions for assignments, and make an effort to clearly communicate all of these to students. She also urged instructors to articulate guidelines for acceptable participation. Kung (2017), too, recommended instructors to state expectations clearly to avoid ambiguity. Zhang (2013) added that by providing clear explanations and expectations, instructors could help international students be more autonomous and self-directed learners.

Instructors can also help improve learner autonomy and self-direction by providing better scaffolding of course content. Both Kung (2017) and Sadykova and Meskill (2019) suggested that instructors structure content in such a way that it allows students to progressively develop proficiency in the skills they need to succeed in the course. Providing clearly structured syllabi and lesson agendas prior to each class are other small but significant steps instructors could take to help students feel more capable and confident (Paralejas, 2013). Researchers repeated their call for instructors to make an effort to distribute course materials to students well in advance of the class. In addition to giving international students more time to review and process the
information to aid their comprehension (Liu et al., 2010), doing so also demonstrates forethought and transparency on the part of instructors.

In terms of assignment timelines and due dates—another important component of course structure—researchers shared conflicting findings. Paralejas (2013) found that students wanted a predictable course structure that included recurring activities and patterns, saying that this would mitigate their stress and keep them more engaged. These students shared that they liked firm due dates and timetables, because these helped them pace themselves during the semester. However, Sadykova and Meskill (2019) suggested that instructors should consider offering flexible course assignments and deadlines so that students could better manage the balance between course requirements and their responsibilities outside of class. In the face of these contradictory recommendations on assignment structure and the firmness or flexibility of deadlines, it might be best for instructors to negotiate student preference on a course-by-course basis.

By clearly articulating course goals and expectations, thoughtfully scaffolding course content and requirements, and by soliciting student input on assignment structure and the firmness or flexibility of deadlines, instructors can improve the structure and organization of their online courses. In doing so, they can help mitigate frustrations voiced by international students over perceived a lack of structure and organization in their online courses.
Be Proactive and Responsive

Another area of challenge identified by international students is that they do not feel like they receive adequate instructor guidance or support to help them adjust to and succeed in their online courses. Researcher suggestions for ways to address these challenges included offering students timely feedback and support and creating opportunities for them to connect with other students in the course.

Lack of feedback was one of the frustrations international students experienced (Paralejas, 2013). Sadykova and Meskill (2019) and Paralejas (2013) advocated for instructors to be more forthcoming with their feedback. By providing students timely feedback on their discussion board entries, for example, instructors can encourage greater levels of engagement as well as help students develop posts that correspond with the expectations of US academic discourse (Sadykova & Meskill, 2019). Doing so also will also help linguistically diverse international students improve their English writing skills (Mahalingappa et al., 2021).

International students also expressed a desire for instructors to take a more active role in orienting them to U.S. academic culture and online learning (Kung, 2017; Liu et al., 2010). Both Liu et al. (2010) and Erichsen and Bolliger (2011) suggested that providing such orientation would serve as an effective form of scaffolding. Kung (2017) even suggested that instructors create acculturation orientation workshops for students that deal with everything from handling personal finances to managing conflict with faculty. Instructors, especially those do not feel like helping students assimilate is part of their responsibility (Mahalingappa et al., 2021), are likely to balk at this latter
A more feasible option for offering proactive support to international students is to create opportunities for them to connect with other students in the course (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020b; Kung, 2017; Sadykova, 2014). In doing so, instructors can help international students build a broader support network. One idea that researchers offered for how instructors can increase connection among students is to incorporate introductions at the outset of the course. This way students know who is in the class with them and can reach out to one another for camaraderie and support (Kung, 2017; Peterka-Benton & Benton, 2019). This is especially critical in online courses, where students do not benefit from being able to meet each other as a result of being in the same physical space.

By providing more frequent and timely feedback on assignments and discussion board posts, creating opportunities for students to connect with one another (especially at the outset of course), potentially offering seminars or workshops to orient students to U.S. academic culture and online learning, instructors can proactively engage with and support international students in their classes. In doing so, they can assuage the disappointment students have expressed at not feeling like they receive adequate instructor guidance or support to help them adjust to and succeed in their online courses.

**Ease Students into Unfamiliar Approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

International students have encountered challenges in their online courses when the instructor using pedagogical approaches that are different from what they are accustomed to (Kan & Chang, 2016; Liu et al., 2010; Okusolubo, 2018; Sadykova &
Meskill, 2019; Szilagyi, 2013; Zhang and Kenny, 2013). There are no magic formulas to teaching international students effectively, but it is helpful for instructors to recognize that background and culture shape students’ as well as their own preferences for some approaches over others.

Just as with all students, individual experiences with or preferences for particular approaches to teaching and learning vary widely. Sadykova (2014) asked international participants what online course activities they liked and disliked most and received contradicting responses. Whole group discussions, for example, were a favorite for 6 out of 13 respondents and yet the least favorite for 3 respondents. Similarly, reading, lectures and conducting individual projects were each the favorite of 4 respondents, and yet the least favorite for 2 respondents. Zhang (2013) also encountered mixed perspectives on what types of learning activities international students prefer. Participants shared that, on the one hand, they liked text-based discussions since it gave them time to think through and craft their responses. On the other hand, students felt like it required more time and they did not like the idea of their response being permanently visible for the duration of the course. Participants in a study by Liu et al. (2010) said that they liked it when instructors utilized both synchronous and asynchronous discussions in order to provide balance.

International students' unfamiliarity with approaches or activities used in U.S. higher education does not mean that instructors need to change their teaching methodology to only use those approaches that they are familiar with. However, it is helpful for instructors to be aware that student struggles are not always related to
content but may at times be related to their choice in teaching method. Kung (2017) proposed that, in order to better meet the needs of students with a variety of culturally-shaped learning preferences, instructors incorporate a range of pedagogical methods into their online courses. Liu et al. (2010) suggested that instructors go a step further and conduct a brief learner assessment at the outset of the course in order to better understand student background and expectations. This could provide them with an idea of what instructional formats students are familiar with or prefer.

Various digital technologies for learning may also be unfamiliar to international students. However, a study by Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020b) showed that numerous digital technologies are perceived as beneficial by students. Although the study was not specific to international students, it included 46 students from culturally diverse backgrounds who were enrolled in asynchronous online classes. Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020b) found that 89% of respondents reported that use of digital technologies advanced their knowledge acquisition in the online learning environment. Some of the technologies that students felt facilitated their participation and enhanced collaboration and learning included: social media networks such as YouTube (91%); multimedia presentations (89%); video presentations and blogs (both 87%); and PowerPoint presentations (84%). Data from Liu et al. (2010) that international students appreciate audio and video options for source materials help to strengthen the connection between the findings from Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020) and international student engagement. The key to effectively using digital learning technologies, even when they are unfamiliar to students, is to provide a clear introduction to the tool, a compelling
reason for incorporating it, and then scaffolding its use so that students can develop the proficiency with it (Kung, 2017).

Another pedagogical approach that international students may be unaccustomed to is the extensive use of group work and collaborative assignments in online courses. The added benefit of group activities is that they help to create connections among students who may have few other opportunities to get to know their classmates in an online course. Multiple researchers (Karkar-Esparat, 2018; Sadykova, 2014; Zhang, 2013) encouraged instructors to recognize the value and support that peer relationships can provide and create additional opportunities for peer interaction. Erichsen and Bolliger (2011) emphasized that international students would benefit from regular contact with others in their program as a way to exchange ideas and learn. Kung (2017) stressed that increased opportunities to connect with their peers could also reduce international students’ experiences of isolation and alienation. Since some students may be more used to instructor lectures or individual assignments rather than collaborative online group work, instructors should take time to explain their reason for using collaborative work as a learning tool (Morong & DesBiens, 2016; Sadykova, 2014). It is also helpful for instructors to provide recommendations for structure, process and roles in order to help students progress smoothly with the assignments.

International students also reported encountering assessment processes that are different from what they were used to in their home countries (Liu et al. 2010; Okusolubo, 2018; Smith, 2021). Whereas many countries employ large end of semester
exams, U.S. instructors tend to use frequent multiple-choice quizzes, short essay tests, and participation levels to assess student learning and independent reasoning skills (Okusolubo, 2018). One strategy that faculty in a study by Mahalingappa et al. (2021) found effective for easing the strain of exams on linguistically diverse international students, was to provide take-home exams to allow students more time to complete them. Students in the study by Liu et al. (2010) identified differences in assessment strategies used in the U.S. versus in their home countries, but generally felt that processes were clear and fair. However, they also said they would like to see instructors employ a greater variety of assessment strategies. In other words, students felt that they would benefit from an instructor employing a greater selection of different approaches to gauge their learning progress, rather than relying on one or two strategies.

A key piece of advice offered by faculty in Nguyen’s (2013) study is to exhibit patience while engaging with international students around differences in instructional practices, communication conventions, and in students’ pace of adjustment. Instructors can also do a number of things to help international students feel more comfortable engaging with unfamiliar teaching, learning and assessment activities. These include conducting a brief learner assessment at the outset of a course to understand their background and expectations; using a variety of approaches, modalities and digital tools for teaching and learning; providing students with a rationale for why they are using a particular approach or tool; encouraging students to connect and collaborate via group work; and giving students recommendations to guide their group process. The
invitation to offer a compelling rationale and clear instructions for the teaching and learning activities they are using also gives instructors an opportunity to reflect on and be deliberate about their pedagogical choices.

**Mitigate Feelings of Isolation and Invisibility**

Researchers have found that factors such as course workload, differing time zones, and rotating classmates contribute towards feelings of isolation and invisibility among international students, as do experiences of microaggression and outright discrimination (Crosta et al., 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Okusolubo, 2018; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). The primary way that instructors can help to mitigate these feelings is by making themselves available to support students and taking the initiative to communicate and connect.

Nguyen (2013) discovered that, while instructors might say that they value open communication between themselves and their students, they did not always recognize the extent to which power distance between themselves and students could act as a barrier. Students might be hesitant to approach an instructor out of respect for their authority (Kang & Chang, 2016) for example, or for fear of reprimand (Nguyen, 2013). Several researchers felt that instructors should take an active role in addressing this challenge and saw instructors as responsible for establishing open communication and connections with students. Zhang (2013) suggested that students who are accustomed to greater power distance between themselves and their instructors need the instructor to initiate interactions so that they feel more comfortable asking for help. Mahalingappa et al. (2021) also strongly urged instructors to make themselves available after class, as
it might be easier for students to approach them rather than asking a question in front of other students during class or less intimidating than going to their office for assistance.

Nguyen (2013) also recommended that instructors take the initiative to build connections with international students. Faculty participants in Nguyen’s study (2013) mentioned that they had found it beneficial for both the international students and themselves to get to know each other better. However, the methods they mentioned for doing so—such as sharing a meal or opening their homes to international students on holidays and other occasions—are not necessarily conducive in an online learning environment. Instructors will need to think creatively about ways to get to know students and build stronger relationships online.

Lastly, one simple yet powerful way for instructors to help students feel seen and acknowledged is by the instructor increasing their interaction on the discussion boards (Karkar-Esperat, 2018). Lack of instructor input in online discussions is one of the main complaints students have about online learning (Zhang, 2013). By being more present, instructors can demonstrate their concern for and interest in students.

By taking the initiative to communicate and connect with international students, by making themselves available for student questions at a variety of times and places, and by being more present in online discussions, instructors can build better relationships and communication between themselves and their students. In doing so, they help international students feel less isolated and invisible.
**Ensure Relevance and Representation**

Another challenge identified in the literature is students feeling frustrated by the limited cultural diversity in the curriculum and materials of their online courses (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017). Researchers found that instructors struggle with knowing how to address and incorporate diverse perspectives into their online courses (Kumi-Yeboah et al. 2018; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a). In some cases, this has resulted in students struggling to understand the relevance of the content, unsure of how to engage in learning activities, or feeling like their contributions were ignored (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Okusolubo, 2018). These experiences have led to experiences of marginalization among international students (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017).

Students in a study by Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2017) expressed a desire for instructors to do more to address multiculturalism in the class environment. As a means of doing so, Liu et al. (2010) and Kung (2017) suggested that instructors use diverse examples and a range of case studies that are relevant to students’ contexts, and incorporate comparative perspectives. Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020a) also encouraged instructors to include more multicultural resources. Kung (2017) proposed that instructors could ask international students in their courses to share how course topics relate to their culture or context. However, Yeh et al. (2021) advised doing so with caution, as it might cause students to feel put on the spot by being asked to share about their personal experiences and cultural perspective. Saunders and Karida (2011) also cautioned against assuming that students associated with a particular group feel
comfortable speaking on behalf of that group or have the necessary expertise to comment on the issues being discussed.

A common concern expressed by researchers and participants alike is the propensity to stereotype international students. Kung (2017) advised that instructors should acknowledge and welcome cultural differences within their course materials and interactions, but take care to not indulge cultural stereotypes. However, this advice may be easier said than done. In a study by Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020), instructors repeatedly voiced concern about how to determine students’ cultural backgrounds in online—and often asynchronous—settings. Instructors may wish, for example, to set up diverse groups for class projects and yet do not want to make assumptions about students simply by looking at their pictures or names.

Instructors in this same study voiced the challenges around their lack of knowledge about what pedagogical practices or activities would be most effective in helping students with diverse cultural backgrounds succeed academically (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a). Clearly, instructors are struggling in their ability to address diversity and meet the needs of international students in online courses. Several have voiced a desire to continuously build on their knowledge of cultural diversity (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020) and the need for more training and support (Cao et al., 2014; Hann et al., 2017; Mahalingappa et al., 2021). Researchers have recommended onboarding, professional development, and mentoring opportunities for instructors in areas such as cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural competence and intercultural communication (Heitner & Jennings, 2016; Kung, 2017; Liu et al., 2010). In doing so, they emphasize the
importance of instructors becoming more aware of the needs and expectations of international students (Zhang & Kenny, 2010); better understanding of how culture influences the learning approaches of different countries (Kung, 2017); avoiding biases and stereotypes (Morong & DesBiens, 2016); and learning to recognize their own assumptions and biases (Kung, 2017). Heitner and Jennings (2016) summarized it well, saying that “higher education faculty who teach online would benefit from onboarding training, professional development, and mentoring specifically targeted to improving their ability to meet these best practices for instructing diverse learners in the online environment” (p. 67). Clearly, more needs to be done to support instructors’ abilities and confidence in designing and facilitating inclusive online courses.

In summary, steps that instructors can take to ensure that course material is relevant and that international students feel included are to incorporate diverse examples, comparative perspectives and a range of case studies into course content and activities and to avoid stereotyping. However, instructors have shared that they are often unsure of how to translate these and other recommendations from theory into action and have requested additional training and support. This study aims to address this challenge by investigating and articulating what the specific knowledge, attitudes and skills are that will help instructors design and facilitate their courses in such a way that they are inclusive for international students.

**Recommended Online Course Design Standards and Equity Rubrics**

The recommended practices described above emerged from research exploring the experiences of international students and their instructors in online courses.
Researchers offered these suggestions as ways to mitigate specific challenges that international students and instructors have encountered in their courses. Some of these challenges stem simply from poor online course design and could generally be resolved by applying proven online course design standards and guidelines. However, many of the challenges are more problematic and result from inequity embedded within the course design or practices of the instructor. Attention to a lack of equity and inclusion in online courses is increasing and several rubrics have been developed to help guide discussion and decision making in online course design and facilitation.

A number of course design standards have cropped up over the last few decades to help guide higher education instructors, instructional designers, and institutions in the creation of online, hybrid or blended courses. They are based on rigorous research into how learning happens and what conditions lead to better learning online (Heaster-Ekholm, 2020). In general, these guidelines are concerned with assuring quality in the overall course design and address aspects of the course such as the structure and organization, instructional materials and activities, instructor role, student engagement, learner support, accessibility, and technology (Quality Matters, 2020a). In particular, standards stress the need for alignment between course objectives, instructional materials and learning activities, and assessment processes. They also emphasize the importance of clear communication; a structure that appropriately scaffolds the development of skills and knowledge; and activities that foster learner engagement and interaction. Some of the more commonly known or widely used among these are the *Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric* (QM); the *California State University Quality*
Learning and Teaching Framework (QLT); the SUNY Online Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR); the California Virtual Campus – Online Education Initiative Course Design Rubric (CVC-OEI); and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology Instructional Design Standards for Distance Learning (AECT Design Standards).

Online course design standards take into account the difference between traditional face-to-face and online learning environments and promote the use of good design and teaching principles. However, they have faced criticism for not expressly addressing cultural diversity and incorporating components of cultural responsiveness (Heitner et al., 2019; Morong & DesBiens, 2016). As a result, some standards have begun to shift to more directly and explicitly address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. In 2020, Quality Matters updated their Higher Education Bridge to Quality guide to incorporate culturally responsive language and inclusive design (Quality Matters, 2020b). The 3rd Edition of the QLT Rubric, released in 2022, also reflects a new emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion (California State University, 2022). Morong and DesBiens (2016) and Heitner et al. (2019) also undertook to lay out guidelines that specifically address culturally responsive design for online learning environments. These guidelines lay out criteria related to areas such as pedagogy, learning objectives, instructional materials, learning activities, assessment, interactions, and instruction that incorporate an appreciation for cultural diversity and an emphasis on making content and practices culturally relevant.
In addition to these updates to course design standards and guidelines, the past few years have seen the development of a number of rubrics specifically focused on equity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness. Some of the more commonly known or widely used among these are the Stanford Course Design Equity and Inclusion Rubric designed by Melissa Ko (2021), the University of California Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Course Design Rubric (UCDEI Rubric) (2021), and the Peralta Equity Rubric version 3.0 (2020). The goal of these rubrics is to encourage instructors and designers to keep diversity, equity and inclusion central in their design decisions and facilitation practices (University of California, 2021) as well as to provide a framework for evaluating courses on their level of equity. Though the specific criteria vary from rubric to rubric, they generally include elements of the following: student support; visible commitment to inclusion on the part of the instructor; steps to mitigate bias; and avenues for students to connect course content to their lived experiences on an ongoing basis (Stimpson, 2021). These latest course design guidelines and equity rubrics are positive developments, but they do not go far enough in providing instructors adequate guidance in how to make their online courses truly culturally inclusive.

Cultural Inclusion as a Guiding Concept

The goal of my study is to help instructors know how to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students. Cultural inclusion extends beyond an appreciation for cultural diversity, to the recognition that

\[^{2}\] Rubrics are tools that are primarily used for evaluation, though they can also guide the development of a project or product. They generally include key criteria, performance descriptors, and a rating scale (University of Texas at Austin, 2017).
Diversity refers simply to differences in individuals and groups. As a nod to diversity, an online instructor can, for example, add an international case study in their course materials (Kung, 2017). However, they may be doing so without any understanding of the complexity of their engagement with students in a cross-cultural learning space. Equity in teaching means addressing differences by providing everyone with what they need in order to be successful (Sun, 2014; Gable et al. 2021). An online instructor can take an equitable approach, for example, by allowing students to identify a case study relevant to them and encouraging them to draw connections to their lived experiences. Cultural inclusion, however, means deliberate and sustained engagement
with diversity that goes beyond the mere acknowledgement of difference to prioritize the “integration of individuals’ experiences, knowledge, and perspectives” (Gable et al., 2021, p.34) into the teaching practices, content, curriculum, and social interactions that make up an educational experience. Cultural inclusion embraces diversity and builds on and amplifies equity. An example of a culturally inclusive approach an online instructor can take is to ensure that the materials they use in the course are authored and created by people from a variety of backgrounds and cultural affiliations and reflect multiple perspectives (Saunders & Kardia, 2011). Going a step further, the instructor can encourage students to “share resources and inject knowledge from their own experiences and diverse sources of information in their online discussions and teamwork” (Heitner et al., 2019, p. 346).

The outcome of cultural inclusion is a greater sense of belonging for international students and a greater degree of academic success. Another outcome is greater “awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding” (Association for American Colleges & Universities, n.d.) of the complex relationships between culture, teaching and learning, especially among those in positions of privilege and power, and the meaningful transformation of academic beliefs, behaviors and systems in order to make education more ethical and just. Cultural inclusion is an important and necessary extension of diversity and equity, yet to date there are no formal recommendations, best practices or frameworks to guide instructors who are teaching international students online on how to design and facilitate courses that are culturally inclusive.
Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study was to identify essential competencies that higher education instructors at U.S. institutions need in order to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students. To accomplish this goal, I reviewed the existing literature on international student experiences in online courses to discern the specific challenges encountered by students and instructors. I then summarized a variety of research-based practice recommendations put forward by educational researchers. Doing so helped me identify some of the unique needs of international students as online learners, as documented in research, along with possible strategies for addressing them. This allowed me to gain a clear picture of the current situation facing international students and their instructors in online courses.

The existing research-based practice recommendations put forward by other researchers are essential pieces to the puzzle. However, they are insufficient in addressing the entirety of the problem. Although they address a number of the challenges related to the nature of online learning (e.g. international students’ need for structure, guidance and responsiveness in online settings) and some of the challenges related to cross-cultural interactions, communication and support (e.g. international students’ need for organized in-class opportunities to connect and build relationships with peer and instructors), they provided little guidance in addressing challenges related to the cultural nature of teaching and learning and nothing in terms of addressing the biases, cultural ignorance, and deficit narratives that instructors potentially bring to the online teaching process. In other words, existing approaches for addressing the
challenges international students encounter in online courses recognized the presence of cultural diversity and make some strides in creating more equitable experiences for them. Yet, these approaches do little to promote the cultural inclusion that is necessary to ensure international student success and wellbeing. This study supplies that missing piece. By using a multi-round Delphi study, I drew on the input from experts in international education, international student support services, intercultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and instructional design for online learning to identify the knowledge, attitudes and skills instructors need in order to design and facilitate culturally inclusive courses that support the success of international students. Using the findings from my research in conjunction with findings from the existing literature, I concluded this study with a list of cultural inclusion competencies. My conceptual approach to this study is captured in Figure 1.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter I described what is known about the connections between culture, learning and the brain and some potential implications these connections have on international students participating in online courses at U.S. institutions. I reviewed the current research on the struggles international students and their instructors experience in online courses and grouped these into key areas of challenge. I also distilled the accompanying researcher suggestions of ways to improve international student success online into a list of research-based practice recommendations. The chapter concluded with a description of my conceptual framework. In Chapter 3, I present a mixed-methods research design that uses a Delphi approach to solicit the
input of a panel of experts in order to determine the competencies U.S. instructors need in order to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The acceleration of online learning opportunities, along with the increasing cultural diversity among online learners, reflects a time of unprecedented change in U.S. higher education. Yet many instructors are unprepared for this shift. The inability of instructors to design for the learning needs of international students online may result, in part, from a lack of clarity around what they need to know and be able to do in order to design online courses that are culturally inclusive. This knowledge gap can be traced to an absence of communication and collaboration among three relevant areas of educational research and practice: instructional design; international education; and culturally responsive pedagogy. My goal with this study was to bring together scholars and practitioners with expertise in these areas in order to identify essential competencies that equip higher education instructors to create online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students.

Using a multi-round Delphi approach, I sought to answer the following three research questions:

RQ1. What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to design online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?
RQ2. What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

RQ3. What instructor competencies, if implemented, do experts believe will most improve international students’ online learning experiences and environment?

The Delphi method is an established research tool to explore new challenges that lack definition, structure group communication, and shape future-oriented research (Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015). This chapter provides a description of my research design, my process for selecting and recruiting participants, and a summary of my data collection procedure.

**Research Design**

**Rationale**

The selection of a research design is both a practical and philosophical choice. It is practical in that it outlines a method for collecting, analyzing and interpreting data in order to address specific research questions. It is philosophical in that it is informed by a researcher’s assumptions around knowledge and research. My decisions pertaining to the design of this study were guided by the nature of the research questions, my beliefs about how best to answer them, and the context surrounding my inquiry.

Because the topic of my study—cultural inclusion of international students in online courses—is one that has not received much attention to date, little is currently understood about this phenomenon. This called for an exploratory posture. The specific questions that framed this study are pragmatic ones, in that they are problem-centered
and real-world practice oriented (Creswell, 2009). My approach to answering the questions by soliciting the expertise of scholars and practitioners and building “consensus amongst informed inquirers” (Badley, 2003, p.296) signals a constructivist epistemology on my part. My overall goal to weave together the opinions of experts in order to generate meaning and insight reflects a distinctly qualitative approach to research (Creswell, 2009). However, the specific techniques I used to accomplish this goal (including open-ended survey questions, rating and ranking activities) and which I felt would provide me the best understanding in this project, were a combination of qualitative and quantitative ones.

This combination of an uncharted topic, pragmatic questions, constructivist epistemology, and blend of qualitative and quantitative techniques led me to a mixed method design. A mixed methods approach is appropriate, said Creswell (2009), when “the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research can provide the best understanding” (p. 18). Specifically, I employed a sequential exploratory strategy (Creswell, 2009) to structure my data collection and analysis processes. In this model, the first phase of data collection and analysis focuses on qualitative data and subsequent phases utilize quantitative data that build on the results of the previous ones. My design for this study also included qualitative questions embedded in the second and third phases, which were intended to support and further inform the quantitative results. Figure 2 depicts an overview of my sequential exploratory strategy.
Figure 2

*Sequential Exploratory Research Strategy*

The Delphi Method

I utilized a Delphi approach for this study, which is a proven technique for exploring new challenges that lack definition (Adler & Ziglio, 1996). Put simply, a Delphi is a procedure for structuring communication among a group of experts around a topic or question of importance (Linstone & Turoff, 2011). It is built on the premise that their collective understanding can fill existing knowledge gaps, produce meaningful insights into complex problems, and inform decision making. A Delphi approach utilizes several rounds of facilitated interaction to offer structured, confidential and democratic means for a researcher to gather, synthesize, refine and build upon expert opinion.
The collaborative nature of a Delphi is one aspect that sets it apart from other approaches. Rather than sampling and tallying individual opinions to arrive at an answer, this approach actively seeks to generate and refine a collective response. With a Delphi, “we are not trying to get a quick subconscious response to a question we ask,” Linstone and Turoff (2011) explained, “but to stimulate thought and consideration about what is usually a very complex question... [and] to make people aware of the pooling of knowledge and different viewpoints among the participants” (p.1714). The give and take nature of the process allows participants to view an issue from a variety of angles to reconsider and potentially revise their judgements when another participant introduces an idea they had not previously considered (Keeney et al., 2006). As a result, a Delphi process is believed to elicit a result that is superior to the response of any given individual (Linstone & Turoff, 2011) and exemplifies the adage that “n heads are better than one” (Dalkey, 1969, p.6).

A characteristic feature of a Delphi study is its successive rounds of iterative questionnaires. The purpose of these multiple rounds is to structure a dialogue of sorts to uncover the experts’ various perspectives and insights. Ideally, the process also brings panelists progressively closer to agreement. However, while consensus is desirable it is not a necessary outcome of a process. Uncovering areas of disagreement can be equally important (Nworie, 2011). Linstone and Turoff (2011), who are credited with launching the Delphi approach to its current popularity (Rowe & Wright, 2011), stressed that stability in panelist responses from one round to the next rather than consensus should signal a studies’ completion.
The technique is a useful tool to use with participants who are distributed geographically. Participants respond to questionnaires asynchronously and on their own time, so it is assumed that responses might be more thoughtful and astute than spur-of-the-moment answers. Since participant responses are anonymized, it is assumed that they may speak more honestly and be less susceptible to groupthink (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). In addition, it is assumed that an impartial researcher will be able to synthesize individual responses in a way that treats them equally (Delbecq et al., 1975).

The Delphi method took shape in the 1950s from the work of Olaf Helmer, Norman Dalkey, Ted Gordon and their colleagues the RAND Corporation. Heralded as “a technique to apply expert input in a systematic manner using a series of questionnaires with controlled opinion feedback” (Linstone & Turoff, 2011, p.1712), it was originally developed as a tool for the Air Force to forecast the probability of enemy attacks during the cold war (Dalkey, 1967; Diamond et al., 2018; Helmer, 1967). By assessing the convergence, or lack thereof, among experts’ judgments the results of a study could be used as a tool for forecasting and making decisions (Nworie, 2011, Powell, 2003).

The Delphi approach has been applied in many fields since its inception, including by educational researchers to explore emerging trends and practices as well as set goals (Nworie, 2011). It is an especially useful tool with which to research questions related to technology and education. Nworie (2011) emphasized that a Delphi is well suited to “time[s] of unprecedented change and developments in technology and rapid exploration of applicable pedagogy” as well as the “introduction of new teaching and learning methodology” (p.24). The current acceleration in online learning in higher
education, along with the increasing cultural diversity among learners, reflects exactly such a time of unprecedented change in education and technology. The questions guiding this study, namely what competencies instructors need in order to create culturally inclusive online courses for international students, reveals a new and complex challenge. Although the associated fields of online learning design, international education, and culturally responsive pedagogy are each supported with robust internal scholarship and practice, there is little work that currently bridges them. Therefore, a Delphi approach was an optimal choice for the design of this study, as it is uniquely suited to bring together researchers and practitioners from these domains to contribute their expertise in addressing this knowledge gap.

**Trustworthiness**

While this study utilized a mixed methods approach, I designed it in a way that foreground and built on qualitative data. I therefore used parameters for evaluating the quality of my findings that are applied to qualitative designs, rather than the ones used for quantitative data (such as internal validity, generalizability, reliability, and objectivity). Since qualitative designs are focused on exploring and understanding a situation (Hasson & Keeney, 2011) and on the resulting meaning (Sandelowski, 1989), the emphasis is on the trustworthiness of findings (Day & Bobeva, 2005; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Central to this distinction is that truth, in qualitative studies, “is subject-oriented rather than researcher-defined” because the focus is generally on “discovery of human phenomena or experiences as they are lived and perceived by subjects, rather than in the verification of a priori conceptions of those experiences” (Sandelowski, 1986,
Lincoln and Guba (1985) specified the four necessary criteria for trustworthiness as credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. I used the principle of trustworthiness and these latter four criteria to validate the quality of my findings and to reinforce confidence in the conclusions I have drawn.

**Credibility**

Credibility speaks to the integrity and believability of the findings of a research study. It addresses whether the data collected and interpretations made are a faithful reflection of participants’ experiences or perceptions (Sandelowski, 1986). To establish credibility, a researcher must verify the accuracy of the data collected and demonstrate that the conclusions they have drawn from the data are tenable. For this study, I used techniques including pilot testing, prolonged engagement, data triangulation and member checking to establish credibility.

Conducting a pilot test of the round one questionnaire helped me to confirm the instructions and questions were coherent and addressed what I hoped to measure with this study. The four months spent collecting data and repeated interactions with the same participants established a pattern of prolonged engagement between myself, the respondents, and the phenomena under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). These interactions allowed for deeper rapport to develop, which may have led to a greater sense of trust and willingness by participants to provide truthful and sincere responses. This prolonged engagement may also have helped mitigate two common threats to validity encountered in Delphi studies, namely insufficient accountability for views expressed and high attrition rates (Hasson & Keeney, 2011).
A third technique I used to strengthen the credibility of this study was to use multiple sources of data, i.e. triangulation, in order to better investigate and understand the questions at hand. Round one included a series of open-ended prompts that not only provided the basis for future rounds but also supplied a rich source of qualitative data for analysis (Powell, 2003). By asking panelists to provide brief rationale for each of the ideas they contributed, I could more confidently interpret their responses. Rounds two and three, in addition to asking panelists to rate and rank items, offered them the opportunity to provide explanatory comments. The mix of quantitative and qualitative data collected offered a more complete picture by giving panelists a variety of ways to express their thoughts and opinions.

Lastly, I was able to verify the credibility of my findings via member checking. Member checking involves sending summaries and analyses back to participants for their review (Lodico, 2010), which can ensure that their perspectives are accurately represented and help reduce bias. Delphi studies are structured in such a way that they naturally include a form of member checking, since each successive round feeds back to panelists a summary of what they contributed in the previous round. However, in round two I also specifically asked panelists whether they felt that their contributions from round one were fairly represented in the competency list provided in round two. If they answered no, I asked them to describe what ideas or important nuances I had left out, overlooked or misrepresented. According to Schmidt (1997), this verification step is vital when combining responses into a consolidated list, as I did. Since the first round of
responses became the foundation for the remainder of the study, it was imperative that I gain additional confirmation on the credibility of my interpretations.

**Confirmability and Dependability**

Confirmability refers to the likelihood that another researcher would arrive at the same or similar conclusions given the same “data, perspective, and situation” (Sandelowski, 1986, p.33). Dependability speaks to the degree to which findings are stable over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Both criteria are related to the integrity of the research process and the degree to which procedures are implemented in systematic and traceable ways (Lodico, 2010). Although replication across time periods is generally not a concern in a design of Delphi study (Hasson & Keeney, 2011), the researcher should still supply comprehensive descriptions of the steps they have taken to gather and analyze data (Powell, 2003).

In order to allow others to trace the decisions and logic guiding this study, I employed Sandelowski’s (1986) recommendation to include a clear decision trail, also known as an audit trail (Day & Bobeva, 2005). This included providing information to support the decisions I made related to method, sample selection, data collection, and levels of agreement (Powell, 2003). I kept track of my musings and choices related to theory, methodology, and analysis throughout this process in a researcher diary and referred back to these notations as I wrote this dissertation.

**Transferability**

Transferability is concerned with the usefulness of findings beyond their current research context. Generalizability, or the ability to broadly apply findings to different
situations, is typically not an expected outcome of a Delphi study (Lodico, 2010). Instead, there is an expectation that findings will “offer a snapshot of expert opinion, for that group, at a particular time, which can be used to inform thinking, practice or theory” (Hasson & Keeney, 2011, p.1701). Researchers are responsible, therefore, to include sufficient details and descriptions about the context and conditions of their study so that others wishing to utilize the findings can assess how similar or different these are to their own situations.

This study is not structured, as some traditional qualitative studies are, to include observations at a research site. Therefore thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973; Ryle, 2009) of the place, participants, culture and other characteristics (Lodico, 2010) are not applicable in this case. However, I made a point to include detailed explanations of my research process as well as demographic and descriptive details about participants in order to provide others a way to assess the transferability of findings in this study.

Lastly, I tried to recruit panelists whose input is broadly relevant. The present study’s panelists hailed from a variety of locations and institutions across the United States, included both scholars and practitioners, and reflected an array of real world expertise. My analysis and synthesis of their responses provides a collective answer to the question of what competencies instructors need in order to create culturally inclusive online courses for international students. Although the findings of this study are limited to these particular experts at this particular moment in time, my hope is that they are a starting point for practice and additional research. In applying and further
investigating these competencies in different contexts and with different populations, these findings can continue to be both refined and elaborated on.

**Ethical Considerations**

The campus Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) are campus units responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of human subjects in research. The protocols they lay out ensure that researchers adhere to the principles of the Belmont Report including respect, beneficence, and justice (NCPHSBBR, 1979). I secured their approval for my research project prior to recruiting participants and collecting data (see Appendix A, *IRB Letter of Exempt Determination*).

Respect, according to the Belmont Report (NCPHSBBR, 1979), means “that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents” (part B, section 1, paragraph 2). In the context of this current study, I interpreted that to mean recognizing participants as decision makers in their own lives and as individuals and for whom time is a valuable commodity. Out of respect for participant autonomy, I made every effort to emphasize that participation in this study was voluntary and avoid any hint of coercion. The Informed Consent acknowledgement that participants received emphasized that they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point should they so choose (see Appendix C, *Participant Acknowledgement of Informed Consent*). Respect for participant time influenced several of my design decisions including my choice of a survey software based on its ease of use as well as limiting the number of questionnaire rounds to three.

A third way I sought to infuse respect into this study was to demonstrate courteousness
in all my interactions with participants as well as recognize and honor their expertise in their respective fields.

Beneficence requires the researcher not only avoid harm but also act in a way that benefits others (NCPHSBBR, 1979). I anticipated that participating in my research project posed a minimal risk of harm to participants. Participant identities were kept confidential throughout the data collection process. The questionnaires were administered through an online survey platform that allowed participants to complete them where and when they chose. Lastly, the questions I asked were not of a sensitive nature. In terms of this research project serving as a benefit to others, the ultimate goal of the study was to apply the findings to improve the online learning experience for international students and their instructors. Although there was no direct benefit to participants for participating in this research, such as an honorarium, indirect benefits included being a part of shaping and advancing the interdisciplinary discourse around the topic of culturally inclusive online courses, as well as potentially adding to their own understanding and practice. Participants received a copy of the list of competencies that resulted from this study. In addition, as a gesture of appreciation for participants’ willingness to contribute their time and expertise, I made a donation to a non-profit organization that provides online higher education solutions for refugees. I hoped that participants might enjoy knowing that their participation directly contributed towards a social good.

The concept of justice in research involving human subjects is concerned with preventing the exploitation of research subjects and ensuring an equitable distribution
of the burdens and benefits of research and its findings (NCPHSBRR, 1979). An area of particular concern to the Belmont Commission was the selection of participants and they admonished against taking advantage of potentially vulnerable populations. For this study, I took care to recruit individuals who had professional expertise directly related to the subject under investigation. As discussed in the section above, their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Another way I sought to practice justice was to give participants the opportunity, once my research was complete, to be credited as a contributor to the study. This was a way to acknowledge and thank them for contributing to this research. Participants had a chance to review the study findings prior to electing whether to be named or not. Those who elected to be credited are listed in the acknowledgement section of my dissertation.

**Researcher Role**

According to Avella (2016) the role of the researcher in a Delphi study is that of a planner and facilitator, rather than as an instrument as is the case in more traditional research designs. As planner, my responsibilities included articulating the issue at hand, determining relevant disciplines to tap for expertise, identifying and inviting participants, and administering the questionnaires. As facilitator, my responsibility was to structure a meaningful exchange of ideas and opinions, and direct the group towards consensus. In addition to crafting and posing questions, this role also included analyzing responses and feeding them back to participants for subsequent rounds.
Avella (2016) commended that “in carefully designed and executed panels [of a Delphi study] the risk of research bias are minimal” (p.307). Even in a well designed study, however, researcher bias can never be fully eliminated since inclinations towards or against ideas, individuals and objects occur naturally in all humans. In the case of Delphi studies, researcher bias can influence what questions are asked, who is selected as experts, and how responses are interpreted and grouped. In order to reduce the influence of my personal biases on this study, I followed a carefully designed research process. However, research is never a value-free undertaking (Greenbank, 2003). Therefore, another important step in mitigating the role of personal bias was to engage in a reflexive activity in order to identify and articulate my positionality and be aware of its potential effect (Holmes, 2020).

One aspect that shaped my positionality in this study is my upbringing. I grew up as a third culture kid, which is someone “who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p.19). I experienced the first 19 years of life through the lens of being a foreigner and, as a result, have a visceral connection as well an intellectual interest in the concepts of international and cross-cultural. Even now, I clearly recall the cognitive and cultural dissonance I felt when transitioning from my first four years of education in a German elementary school to a fifth-grade classroom in an American international school in the United Kingdom. This was followed by another transition to an international school in Austria at the start of eighth grade, and finally a transition to the U.S. for college.
Formative experiences such as these shape my belief that culture plays an important role in education and drove my scholarly curiosity to pursue this project.

Another aspect that may have introduced bias into this study are my personal and professional experiences with online learning. I completed a fully online master’s program in Instructional Design and Technology in 2015 and have worked in various capacities in the arena of online learning since then. As such, I tend to interpret research and discourse on the topic of online learning through the lenses of my experiences as a former online student and as a current instructional designer. I have established views on best practices related to online learning that had the potential to shape how the data was collected and analyzed.

The act of articulating my positionality “acknowledges and recognizes that researchers are part of the social world they are researching and that this world has already been interpreted by existing social actors” (Holmes, 2020, p.2). Ultimately, while attempts should be made to address and mitigate researcher bias within a study, I do not believe that they can be completely purged from the research process. Fittingly, then, I chose to adopt a pragmatic approach for this study, in the form of a mixed methods design. Morgan (2013) defended a pragmatic approach as one that recognizes the connection between beliefs, actions and inquiry and “insists on treating research as a human experience that is based on the beliefs and actions of actual researchers (p.7). Echoing Rossman and Rallis (2017), I saw my role as researcher as a tool through which the investigative process took place. This research will always be my research, conducted, expressed and lived in a specific time and context.
Limitations to this Method

The Delphi method is not without critique. Concerns about about the approach include assumptions a researcher makes about panelists expertise, bias, and motivation; protracted timelines that can lead to participant attrition; and limits to the generalizability of results (Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Nworie, 2011; Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015). Although it was not possible to eliminate these limitations, I took steps to mitigate the potentially negative effects they could have on this study.

To ensure that panelists had sufficient expertise to speak with insight and authority, I identified clear selection criteria prior to beginning the recruitment process. To assuage the potential influence of bias and personal circumstances that might unduly affect participant responses, I was explicit in my questionnaire instructions and offered clear guidance on what was being asked and why (Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015). This decreased the likelihood that participants would read their own inclinations into the process. I also pilot tested the first round questionnaire before distributing it to panelists, in order to improve clarity and precision of the instrument.

The concern about panelist motivation in Delphi studies is that researchers will assume an inherent interest on the part of panelists to participate in discussions related to their field of study (Keeney et al., 2006; Linstone & Turoff, 2002). In reality, although some participants are motivated by an inherent interest to invest time and energy in a study such as this, not all will be. Nworie (2011) suggested offering participants incentives to provide additional motivation, albeit ones that will not improperly influence them. In line with this recommendation, I promised experts to make a
donation to a non-profit focused on providing online higher education solutions for
refugees as a token of appreciation for their participation.

Concerns about participant attrition stem from the requirement that participants respond to multiple rounds of questionnaires over a lengthy period of time (Hasson & Keeney, 2011; Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015). This can be exacerbated by slow or non-response by participants, leading to an even lengthier process. To mitigate the potential for panelist attrition and slow or non-response, I implemented recommendations by Hsu and Sandford (2007) that included establishing personal contact with panelists at the outset of the study; designing the questionnaire so that it was easy and quick to respond to; following up regularly with participants, such as to prompt non-respondents and to thank those who had responded; and offering a meaningful incentive. I also reduced the number of rounds in the study to three, following feedback from participants that the prospect of the five I initially proposed felt overwhelming. Nevertheless, I experienced some slow and non-response. In order to prevent drawing the process out and potentially losing other participants as a result, I elected to drop participants from the study if they did not respond in a timely manner or respond to my follow up inquiries.

Finally, there are concerns about the generalizability of the results of a Delphi. Since participants are deliberately chosen for the study rather than randomly selected, it is not possible to infer that their opinions represent those of the broader population (Skulmoski, Hartman & Krahn, 2007). However, my concern in this study was not to ascertain the opinion of the general population but rather to distill guidance from those
who have expertise relevant to designing culturally inclusive online courses for international students. According to Okoli and Pawlowski (2004), notwithstanding critiques of generalizability, findings from a Delphi study are valuable for identifying and prioritizing issues and theory building. They explained that because participants are selected for their depth and range of experience, “inquiring about their experiences and opinions [allows] researchers [to] significantly extend the empirical observations upon which their initial theory is based” (p.27). To improve the transferability of my findings, as described above, I made sure to include sufficient details and descriptions about the context and conditions of this study so that others wishing can assess how similar or different these are to their own situations.

**Sampling Procedure**

The success of a Delphi study rests on the researcher’s ability to secure participants who have deep understanding and expertise on the topic in question (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). A Delphi approach is often used to investigate questions that are speculative and complex in nature and for which a sample of the general population may not have adequate insight to. Therefore, efforts to select a sample that is statistically representative of the population is not desirable in a Delphi study (Nworie, 2011). Instead, it is necessary to select participants who are known for their expertise within a given area. For this study, I used the parameters described below to identify a pool of experts using non-random purposive sampling.
Panel Structure

Groups of experts selected for Delphi studies are referred to as panels, and individual members referred to as panelists. The number, size, and composition of panels varies depending on the nature of the research. There is currently no conclusive agreement among scholars on the appropriate number of experts needed in a panel (Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015). Recommendations range from 10 to 50 participants (Delbecq et al. 1975; Jones & Twiss 1978; Nworie, 2011), with the majority of studies averaging 15-20 participants (Ludwid, 1997). Some researchers have suggested that smaller panels of 10-15 members are adequate when there is homogeneity among panelists, data are being triangulated, and/or the nature of study is exploratory rather than confirmatory (Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015). Brockhoff (1975) and Brown et al. (1969) argued that even panels of four or seven experts, respectively, can suffice in certain circumstances. However, there is also evidence that larger panels generally lead to more reliable findings (Dalkey, 1969). To cut through the disagreement and provide a voice of guidance, Nworie (2011) suggested that attention to potential group dynamics rather than group number and statistical power should drive the decision around how many participants to enlist.

For this study, I decided on an initial recruitment target of 30-35 participants. This number of panelists would be large enough to provide meaningful data, as well as absorb up to 30-40% attrition (or 10-15 experts) over the course of the study without severely compromising the results. Yet this number would also be small enough to keep
communication, analysis, and turnaround times between rounds manageable and on-track.

**Selection Criteria**

The selection process for Delphi panelists is generally guided by precedent as well as “common sense and practical logistics” (Keeney, Hasson & McKenna, 2006, p.208). Participants should possess relevant knowledge and experience with the topic; the ability, interest and time to participate; and the ability to communicate effectively (Skulmoski, Hartman & Krahn, 2007). In addition, Rowe et al. (1991) suggested including a diversity of expertise in order to ensure a wide knowledge base. These criteria are difficult to measure, therefore I used my best judgment in determining the extent to which participants met them.

In order to engage participants who were “well known, knowledgeable, informed, and professionally respected” (Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015, p.89), I used a modified version of the guidelines put forward by Rubio et al. (2020) to select experts for this study. These guidelines included that an individual: (a) had a minimum five years of experience as a scholar and/or practitioner in a U.S. higher education context related to one of the three key domains (online learning; international education and/or international student support services; culturally responsive pedagogy and/or intercultural competence); (b) had made a meaningful contribution to relevant literature within the past eight years (scholar) or was actively and visibly engaged in relevant work (practitioner); (c) was a member of a professional organization related to one of the domains. I also took to heart Powell’s (2003) comment that those most likely
to use the results of a study such as this could also be valuable and enthusiastic contributors.

To begin the selection process, I identified key terms related to each domain and looked for evidence of one or more of these in potential panelists’ publications, curricula vitae, or institutional biographies. For online learning, the key terms included online learning; instructional design; universal design for learning (UDL); and educational technology. For culturally responsive pedagogy, key terms included culturally responsive pedagogy or teaching; online equity; inclusive education or teaching; multicultural online education; cultural or intercultural competence; and cultural humility. For international students, the key terms included international students; international education; internationalization; multilingual or English language learners; or collaborative online international learning (COIL). I also reviewed membership lists and conference programs of relevant professional organizations, such as the Online Learning Consortium. I attempted to create balanced representation within the panel by securing roughly the same number of participants from each domain of expertise.

In terms of ensuring ability, interest and time, I informed potential recruits in my initial request to participate about the topic, purpose and time commitment involved. These were reiterated in the informed consent provided at the outset of round one, in which I asked them to acknowledge their understanding and consent. In terms of ensuring effective communication skills, I assumed that if they had a record of
publications or presentations, or were instructors or professionals within their field, that their communication skills were adequate to participate in this study.

In order to identify experts with these necessary qualifications, I utilized the process proposed by Okoli and Pawlowski (2004), who suggested identifying potential participants by beginning with personal contacts and then moving on to review literature, pertinent conference presentations, and membership registries of professional organizations. I also used their recommendation to ask already-identified experts to nominate individuals within their networks. This helped to guarantee broader representation, as these individuals were able to suggest experts I had not originally identified.

**Participant Motivation**

Linstone and Turoff (2002) observed that “few people like questionnaires…. [Therefore] motivation requires more than a good cause, a pep talk, and thanks” (p.66). They, along with several other sources (e.g. Keeney et al., 2006; Nworie, 2011; Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015), warned me not to assume that a panelists’ expertise in a subject equated to an automatic willingness to contribute to my research study. Because of the ongoing input requested of panelists, Delphi studies are especially prone to participant nonresponse and attrition. Suggestions to mitigate these pitfalls included incentivising panelists with honoraria, gifts or rewards; securing a respected sponsor to back the research project; or working with gatekeepers — i.e. prestigious organizations or individuals within their field — to identify and recruit participants and whose
recognition of the otherwise anonymous participants can make them feel important and valued.

As this study is for the purpose of dissertation research, support or backing by a prestigious sponsor or individual, as well as honoraria in an amount that would seem commensurable, was not possible. However, I took several steps to increase participant motivation. The first was to make a strong case in my recruitment email for the importance and timeliness of this research. Second, I promised to send participants a summary of the finalized list of competencies, as I assumed that those recruited for the study would have a professional or personal interest in the findings. Third, I attempted to establish a sense of connection with each panelist by sending personalized invitations and emails, being responsive to their questions, and sending messages of appreciation at the conclusion of each round.

A fourth way I tried to sustain panelist motivation was to provide them a sense of ownership in the process. Keeney et al. (2006) stressed the importance of panelists feeling like partners in the study, such as by seeing clearly that each round is built directly on their input. For each round, I reported back to panelists on the results from the previous round and how I was incorporating those findings into the current round. I also anticipated that asking panelists to use the comments feature in the Welphi software—which would allow them to make as well as read each other’s comments—would encourage them to communicate and collaborate with one another despite the veil of anonymity. However, this function did not prove as useful to that end as I had expected. It became clear from the wording of most comments that participants saw
that function as a way to communicate their thoughts with me rather than with each other.

Finally, as a fifth way to incentivize participants, I pledged to make a $1 donation for every questionnaire completed within the specified timeframe to Kiron, a non-profit focused on providing online higher education solutions for refugees. As a result of the timing of round two, which fell at the end of the spring semester for many participants, and due to its intense nature, I doubled the amount pledged to $2 per completed questionnaire. I hoped that some participants might be motivated by the idea of contributing to a related social cause by completing their questionnaire in a timely manner. I received a combined total of 41 responses for rounds one and three, and 25 completed questionnaires for round two, which equated to a $91 donation for Kiron. However, out of gratitude towards the panelists who gave generously of their time and expertise, I increased the donation amount to $200.

Recruitment

Prior to recruiting panelists, I secured permission from the campus Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) and Institutional Review Board (IRB). These units are responsible to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of human subjects in research. The approval process helped ensure that I adhered to the principles of the Belmont Report when engaging with research participants, including respect, beneficence, and justice (NCPHSBBR, 1979).

Once I had received IRB approval, I began to recruit panelists on a rolling basis using the criteria described above. I used email to contact experts and introduce myself,
explain the purpose, topic, and significance of the study, and outlined the commitment to participate. The email included a link to a 3-minute video I had created with an overview of my project and a link to a project highlights document. I also included a date to respond by, which in most cases was a week. I sent follow-up emails to those who did not respond within seven days of my initial appeal.

Regardless of whether recruits responded with a yes or no, I wrote back to thank them for their response and asked them to suggest the names and email contacts of other experts whom they knew and thought might be qualified and might be interested in the study. This added snowball sampling was a helpful way to secure a list of additional experts whom I may not have come across in my own research (Skulmoski, Hartman & Krahn, 2007). In total, I sent email invitations to 55 individuals. Thirty-five of these agreed to participate. Another eight declined, and 12 did not respond. Within any given round, those experts who did not complete a given or respond to my follow-up were removed from subsequent rounds.

**Sample Description**

In order to help me describe the collective technical expertise and general demographics of respondents in this study, I asked panelists a series of 12 questions at the end of round one. Response to these was not required and, as a result, some participants opted to not complete them. However, the majority of participants did choose to do so (ranging from n=21 to 27, depending on the question), which allowed me to provide a reasonably comprehensive description of the study sample.
Technical Expertise. To gauge panelists’ expertise, I asked questions related to their time working in higher education; familiarity with the three education domains; and experience in design and facilitation as well as with international students. Panelists’ years working in the higher education sector ranged from 5 to 42, with 23 of 27 panelists having 10 or more years of experience. All respondents, save one, currently work in Higher Education.

In terms of their level of expertise in the area of online learning and instructional design, 14 out of 26 respondents described themselves as Expert (advanced knowledge and experience); 10 as Competent (some knowledge and experience); and 2 as Novice (basic knowledge or experience). In terms of their level of expertise in culturally responsive pedagogy or (inter-) cultural competence, 11 out of 24 described themselves as Expert; 11 as Competent; and 2 as Novice. When asked about their expertise in international education or international student support services, 8 out of 25 respondents described themselves as Expert; 14 as Competent; and 3 as Novice. Interestingly, several of the panelists whom I deemed as experts based on their work, research and/or publications, rated themselves as Competent instead of Expert. There could be many reasons for this, including a sense of modesty on their part or a failure on my part to include a robust enough description of each category. On the other hand, several panelists also surprised me by marking themselves Expert in categories that I had not realized, during the recruitment phase, were areas of expertise for them.

Overall, these results reflect that the study sample represents a high degree of expertise in the three areas of specialty I deemed as necessary for this study.
Table 3

Panelists’ Expertise in the Three Key Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Expertise</th>
<th>Expert: advanced knowledge &amp; experience</th>
<th>Competent: some knowledge &amp; experience</th>
<th>Novice: basic knowledge or experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online learning and instructional design</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally responsive pedagogy or cultural competence</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International education or international student support services</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 25

I asked panelists about their experience designing and/or facilitating online courses. Out of 25 respondents, 2 said they had never designed or facilitated an online course, while 12 said that had designed/facilitated 10 or more over the course of their careers. The other 11 respondents reported having designed/facilitated anywhere from 3 to 9 online courses. Asked whether these online courses included international students, 6 panelists responded that all did; 9 said most did; 6 said a few did; and 2 said they did not know how many of the online courses they designed/facilitated included international students.

In addition to designing or facilitating courses that included international students, participants reported numerous other capacities in which they supported or worked with international students. These included things like student advising; in residence halls; as a part of international student programing and/or campus
internationalization; building community and belonging for international students and helping them navigate difference; providing instructional technology workshops and consultation; working with them as student workers or colleagues; offering faculty development and tutor training on working with multilingual learners; focusing on them as research subjects; collaborating with them on research teams; working with campus admissions and administrators on international student policies and procedures; and designing campus programming to builds intercultural competence and global citizenship among all students.

I also asked panelists to share if they had spent time as an international student at some point in their own educational journey and, if so, to provide a brief description. Ten panelists said they had spent time as an international student, many of them reporting multiple experiences and/or years in that role. Their descriptions included experiences as international students within the United States (5 respondents), as well as experiences of being international students within other countries (6 respondents). These experiences were primarily at high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels of study, although one respondent shared that they spent most of their childhood outside their country of citizenship. Panelists described their lengths of study as ranging anywhere from one month to many years.
Table 4

Panelists’ Technical Expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of years working in Higher Education (n=27)</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of online courses designed/ facilitated</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did these online courses include international students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did these online courses include international students?</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A few</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal experience as international student (n=18)</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 25, except for where noted*

Panelist Demographics. In order to describe the general characteristics of the experts in this study, I asked them to answer questions about their gender identity and ethnic/racial background. Due to a limitation of the questionnaire software, respondents were not able to select multiple identifiers for a given question. Therefore I
provided a text box along with each question, in case panelists wanted to provide a more nuanced answer to any of the questions posed. Participants also had the option of skipping any question they did not want to answer.

Twenty-one panelists answered the question about gender, with 6 identifying themselves as a man and 15 identifying themselves as a woman. Twenty-one panelists answered the question about ethnicity/race, with 15 identifying themselves as Caucasian/White, 2 as Black Caribbean, 2 as Hispanic/Latinx, 1 as Arab American, and 1 as Asian American.

**Table 5**

*Panelist Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 21.*

In summary, although the data do not reflect a complete picture of the study sample because some participants chose not to answer the questions, the results of this section indicate a panel with high levels of expertise with online learning, culturally
responsive pedagogy, and international students within higher education. The sample is less robust in terms of demographics, with a strong representation of people who identify as women and those who identify as Caucasian/White. Lastly, the panel represents a group who have considerable experience working with, teaching, or designing for international students, and who also have a personal experience of being an international student that they could draw on in contributing their expertise.

**Data Collection**

**Timing**

Because they aim to generate thoughtful input and move groups towards agreement around a topic, Delphi studies are lengthy processes. Keeney et al. (2006) warned that the amount of time required is often underestimated, which I found to be true in my case. I initially proposed conducting four rounds of questionnaires—along with a fifth if needed—that would each last approximately one month (i.e. two weeks for panelists to complete the questionnaire and two weeks for me to analyze the data and feed them back into the next round). However, after the first round of data collection and analysis took twice as long as anticipated, I opted to revise the process. A few panelists expressed concern at the proposed number of rounds and I was concerned that the protracted timeline would lead to significant participant attrition. In addition, having analyzed one round of responses, I felt confident that three rounds of questionnaire would suffice in providing a meaningful answer to my research questions and that little value would come from adding a fourth or fifth round.
I began the recruitment process in March 2021, and it took approximately one month to secure agreement of 35 experts to participate in my study. I launched the round one questionnaire at the beginning of April 2021 and kept the questionnaire open for three weeks to accommodate participants who needed extra time. The subsequent analysis took me five weeks, as opposed to the anticipated two weeks. I distributed the round two questionnaire at the beginning of June and again kept it open for an additional week at the request of a participant. Round two analysis required three-and-a-half weeks. I sent the round three questionnaire out late July and kept it open for 15 days. Its closure on August 6 marked the end of the data collection process and panelist participation. In total, the data collection process lasted four months.

**Instrumentation**

A distinctive feature of a Delphi study is its iterative rounds of questionnaires, which are used to prompt reflection, solicit response and gradually build agreement on a topic. For this study, I used a web-based survey tool to collect participant responses. Delphi processes are prone to fail if they are not grounded in good administrative systems (Keeney et al., 2006). To ensure that my survey process flowed smoothly, I used a paid subscription to a software called *Welphi* to administer questionnaires for this study. Welphi is a survey platform specifically designed for web-based Delphi processes. Welphi includes valuable features for the researcher, such as (a) the ability to send customized emails and automatic reminders; (b) an option to include informed consent information; (c) fully customizable survey pages for open and closed questions; (d) opportunities for participants to rank order options in light of a specific context.
presented; and e) basic data analysis features. Welphi offers several valuable features for participants as well, including (a) the ability for them to validate, propose changes and add to a list of competencies; (b) charts that build automatically with the previous rounds’ information so they can more easily analyze the information; and (c) forum/chat features where they can anonymously exchange their points of view in real time.

Overall, Welphi proved a useful tool with which to organize the Delphi process, collect and analyze responses, and combat participant attrition (Shelton & Adair Creghan, 2015).

I used Welphi for all three rounds of the study. In order to assess the Welphi software interface and user experience, as well as to test and refine the clarity of instructions and survey questions, I pilot tested first round of questionnaire. Skulmoski et al. (2007) suggested that pilot studies are useful for “inexperienced researchers who may be overly ambitious regarding the scope of their research or underestimate the time it will take a Delphi research participant to fully respond to the Delphi survey” (p.4). For the pilot test, I recruited three faculty members in higher education who were not among the experts being recruited for the main part of the study. I met with each tester separately via a video conference meeting and asked them to proceed through and complete the informed consent, instructions, and survey questions while in the meeting with me. As they narrated their process for me, they helped identify questions, concerns, and problems as well as any elements of the questionnaire they found particularly helpful. Using their feedback, I revised the organization and flow of the questionnaire.
Safeguarding the Data and Identities

I took several measures to ensure the safety and confidentiality of both the data collected and the identity of participants. In order to minimize the risk of breaches of confidentiality I: (a) only collected personal information from participants that was essential to the research; (b) administered the questionnaires using software for which I had a password protected premium account; (c) used passwords to safeguard access to the survey software, files, and my laptop; (d) used codes instead of names on exported data and stored the master key linking codes and names in a separate and secure location; (e) summarized research findings so that there is no identifiable information to link specific responses back to participants. Finally, in alignment with campus Institutional Review Board protocol, all electronic data files related to this research will be destroyed 3 years after the close of the study.

Although I put in place measures to safeguard participant identities, their identities could not be completely anonymous in this study. Anonymity, by definition, is when a participant's responses cannot be linked back to them in any way, even by the researcher (Keeney et al., 2006). However, in a Delphi study, participants and their answers are known to the researcher though not to each other. McKenna (1994) described this condition as quasi-anonymity. A benefit to quasi-anonymity is the sense of personal touch (Keeney et al., 2006) that participants experience from the researcher, which can lead to greater feelings of collaboration and ownership in the process and result in higher response rates.
I also opted to give participants the opportunity to identify themselves once the study was complete, to be acknowledged for their contribution. Delphi studies differ from research studies in that they rely on the input of competent experts. In the same way that I would not refer to another’s writing in my literature review without giving them credit, it seemed appropriate to ask panelists if they would like to be credited for their participation in and contribution to the study results. Once the data collection and analysis processes were complete, I sent panelists an executive summary and a finalized list of competencies and asked them whether they would like to be acknowledged as a contributing expert. Those who responded affirmatively were listed in the Acknowledgement section of this dissertation. Those who did not wish to be credited or did not respond remained anonymous.

Data Collection Process

Data collection for the current Delphi study consisted of three phases: (1) exploring the topic; (2) refining the list of competencies; and (3) ranking competencies (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004; Schmidt, 1997). The initial phase of data collection was a generative one in which I encouraged participants to use creative and divergent thinking to brainstorm possible instructor competencies. These responses became the foundation for the subsequent phases. Phase two focused on moving the group towards more convergent thinking, by introducing a rating activity. The third phase included an evaluative component. I used a ranking exercise to measure the levels of agreement among experts and to create a prioritized list of essential instructor competencies.
These three phases corresponded to three rounds of questionnaires. Iterative rounds of questionnaires to solicit input from experts is a key characteristic of the Delphi method. The number of rounds in a study will vary based on the overall purpose of the research, but they usually number from two to four (Keeney et al., 2006). Some researchers continue rounds until participant consensus is achieved (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004), while others look for stability (i.e. lack of change) in the responses as a signal to the end the data collection process (Linstone & Turoff, 2011). However, available resources and participant willingness are also a factor in determining the number of rounds. Powell (2003) suggested that three rounds is most typical and that “although the possibility of more than three rounds is offered, there is a need to balance time, cost and possible participant fatigue” (p.378). Skulmoski et al. (2007) also warned that, as the number of rounds increases, so might participant attrition. Linstone and Turoff (2002) found that findings did not tend to change significantly after three rounds and that additional rounds tended to frustrate and fatigue participants.

Round One Data Collection

The goal of round one was to invite experts to brainstorm the specific knowledge, attitudes and skills that U.S. instructors need in order to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive and meet the needs of international students. It also served to introduce panelists to my research process and solicit their informed consent. I sent the round one questionnaire to the 35 experts who had agreed to take part in the study. Each participant received two emails to initiate the process. One was sent out through Welphi, the survey software, with a link to the questionnaire.
The other one was a personalized email from me, welcoming them to the process and letting them know to look for the Welphi email. I received 29 responses (an 83% response rate), of which 27 were complete and 2 partially complete.

Upon accessing the round one questionnaire, panelists were greeted with a brief welcome message and instructions (see Appendix D, *Round 1 Questionnaire*). This page also gave them the option to watch a three-minute video I had created about the study process. This was followed by a consent to participate form (see Appendix C, *Participant Acknowledgement of Informed Consent*). Participants were required to select the *I Consent* button in order to proceed. After giving consent, participants were able to view instructions for the task along with a link to a glossary of the key terms I used throughout the study. Next, I presented them with a scenario to keep in mind as they progressed through the questionnaire. Although they would be approaching the questions through the lens of their own expertise, I wanted to provide them a shared framework from which to approach the problem. The scenario read:

An instructor at a U.S. university is preparing to teach an online course next semester. Approximately 40% of the students enrolling in the course will be international students. International students are students enrolled in higher education institutions outside their country of origin. They may or may not be physically residing in the U.S. while participating in their course of study. Consider what differences the instructor might encounter in this course versus a previous one they taught with no international students enrolled in it. What
knowledge, attitudes and skills might they need to address these differences effectively?

I posed a series of three questions for panelists to consider in light of the scenario. The first question asked participants to briefly brainstorm as many ideas as possible about what challenges international students and instructors might encounter in online courses. This question was to prime participants’ thinking so that they would be prepared to answer the next two questions. The second question asked panelists to list ideas for what specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills instructors need in order to design culturally inclusive online learning experiences for international students. I defined design as the process of creating learning content and activities (i.e. what is commonly thought of as course preparation), which generally takes place before the course is live and precedes facilitation. I also asked panelists to provide a brief rationale for each idea they listed, in order to help me more accurately analyze and group responses for future rounds. The third question paralleled the second, but asked what specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills instructors need in order to facilitate culturally inclusive online learning experiences for international students. I defined facilitation as the process of leading students through learning content and activities (i.e. what is commonly thought of as teaching), which generally follows design and takes place during the course. The final section of the questionnaire included descriptive and demographic questions about the experts themselves, so that I would be able to describe the collective technical expertise and general characteristics of respondents in this study.
Participants had two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Prior to the stated due date, I sent those who had yet to complete it two reminder emails. By closing date, I had received 26 completed responses (a 74% response rate). I sent one final follow up in to those who had not yet responded, which generated one additional completed response for a 77% response rate. In total, I received 27 complete and 2 incomplete questionnaires for round one. For the incomplete questionnaires, one participant answered questions 1 and 2 (of 3), while the other only answered question 1. I opted to include their responses for analysis, since the purpose of this round was to brainstorm broadly and include as many ideas as possible. I sent a thank you email to each of the participants who completed the questionnaire.

Round Two Data Collection

The goal of round two was for experts to verify and further refine the list of competencies collected during the previous round, add any items they felt were critical but missing, and rank the helpfulness of each item. I sent the questionnaire to the 29 experts who had completed the previous round. Participants received a personalized email from me as well as an automated email from Welphi with the link to the questionnaire. They had two weeks to submit their responses. I sent two reminder emails prior to the stated deadline. In total, I received back 25 completed responses (a 86% response rate).

The round two questionnaire included three questions (see Appendix E, Round 2 Questionnaire). Panelists received a list of 100 competency statements that I had compiled from round one responses. The first question asked them to rate the level of
helpfulness of each of the 100 competency statements on a Likert-type scale. To provide panelists with a shared starting point for answering the questions, I provided the following brief scenario:

Imagine the Center for Teaching and Learning on your university campus was planning to design a series of trainings to equip instructors to create culturally inclusive online courses for international students and were asking for their help in identifying what competencies would be most important to include in these training sessions.

Panelists were asked to rate each item as either (a) not at all helpful; (b) slightly helpful; (c) moderately helpful; (d) very helpful; (e) extremely / most helpful. They had the option to provide additional comments for the selections they made, such as a rationale for their choice, questions, or suggestion.

The remaining two questions of the questionnaire were aimed at validating my interpretation of data from round one, and filling in any perceived gaps. Question two asked experts if they felt their contributions from round one were fairly represented in the list of competencies created for round two. This was to verify that the interpretations I made from their round one responses were accurate and appropriate and whether they were satisfied with the way I had distilled their input into collective competency statements. Question three asked panelists if there were any important competencies missing from the compiled list that they would like to see added.
**Round Three Data Collection**

My goal for the final round was to see which items experts agreed on were the most essential. To accomplish this, I asked experts to rank each of the three sets of competencies (i.e. knowledge, attitude, and skills) from most essential to least essential.

The round three questionnaire opened with a summary of the results from round two (see Appendix F, *Round 3 Questionnaire*). The lists of competencies consisted of 52 statements from round two that 51% or more of experts had rated as extremely / most helpful or very helpful. These included 15 knowledge competencies, 17 attitude competencies, and 20 skills competencies. I presented each of these three categories as a separate ranking exercise. I also included the link to a complete list of the competencies, their ratings, and descriptive statistics so that those experts who wanted to could explore the round two results in greater detail. In order to provide panelists with a shared starting point for answering the question, I reiterated the scenario presented in round two and asked panelists to rank each competency according to how essential they thought it is in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students. I asked them, when weighing their answers, to consider which competencies they thought would be particularly impactful for international students versus those more generally important for online teaching.

I used an interactive process called a Q-sort to structure the ranking process. A Q-sort is a drag-and-drop activity that provides participants with statements and asks them to order and rank these statements on a pyramid-shaped grid (see Appendix H,
Instructions for Completing a Q-Sort). I used an online software called Q Method to create the three Q-sorts. Links for participants to access the Q-sort were embedded into the round three Welphi questionnaire. For each of the three categories, experts were asked to 1) complete the Q-sort; 2) provide any optional comments they would like to share about their rankings; and 3) identify any competencies not included from the previous round that they strongly felt should still have been included. For this final question, I provided a list of the competencies that did not make the final list.

I sent the round three questionnaire to the 25 experts who had completed round two. As with both of the previous rounds, I sent panelists both a personalized email and the automated one from Welphi with a link to access the questionnaire. The personalized email also included a unique participation code with which to access and complete the Q-sorts. Prior to the stated deadline, I sent two reminder emails to those who had yet to complete the questionnaire. I had hoped that the visual and interactive nature of the Q-sort, as well as the novelty of it, might appeal to panelists. It is possible, though, that asking panelists to engage with this new format served as a deterrent. One participant wrote to say that they felt overwhelmed by the Q-sort and, while they were supportive of my research, they wished to withdraw from the round. In total, I received back 19 questionnaires (a 76% response rate). However, only 15 of these included completed Knowledge Q-sorts (a 60% response rate) and only 14 included completed Attitude and Skills Q-sorts (56% response rates). Figure 3 summarizes the three-rounds of my data collection process.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the mixed-methods design I used to conduct my research for this study. Using a three-round Delphi process, I collected both qualitative and quantitative data from a panel of experts in order to identify a list of requisite instructor competencies and to determine which of the competencies are most essential. I discussed in detail my rationale for choosing this approach, steps I took to ensure the trustworthiness of the results, my sampling procedure, and my procedure for collecting data. In Chapter 4, I will describe the processes I used in analyzing the data and summarize the results of the study.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify a list of competencies that higher education instructors at U.S. institutions need in order to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students. I used the following three research questions to guide my study:

RQ1: What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need to design online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

RQ2: What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

RQ3: What instructor competencies do experts believe are most essential to improving international students’ online learning experience?

To answer my research questions, I conducted a Delphi study that consisted of three successive rounds of questionnaires administered to a panel of experts. My panel included 29 scholars and practitioners from across the U.S. who were experienced in international education, international student support services, intercultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and instructional design for online learning. Round one included a brainstorm of the specific knowledge, attitudes and skills that instructors need in order to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally
inclusive. Subsequent rounds built on and refined the responses from the previous round to bring panelists progressively closer to agreement on a list of requisite instructor competencies. Each round of the Delphi process included data collection followed by data analysis. This chapter includes a detailed account of my analysis process and the results that emerged.

**Round One Data Analysis**

**Student and Instructor Challenges**

The first question on the round one questionnaire asked participants to briefly brainstorm as many ideas as they could about what challenges international students and instructors might encounter in online courses. Initially I did not intend to do much with these responses. I had posed the question as a way to prime participants’ thinking so that they would be in a more focused frame of mind to answer the questions pertaining to competencies instructors need in order to design and facilitate culturally inclusive online courses. Once I received back the questionnaires, however, I noted a richness to the responses. I realized that by analyzing the data, I could compare these findings about student and instructor challenges to those detailed in scholarly literature.

**Student Challenges**

Twenty-nine experts contributed ideas about possible challenges that international students might encounter in U.S. online courses. A number of the themes that emerged in my analysis paralleled those I found in my review of the literature including difficulties with language and communication; inadequate structure, guidance and responsiveness on the part of the instructor; unfamiliar approaches to learning and
assessment; confusion about academic integrity and plagiarism; feelings of isolation and invisibility; and lack of representation in, and relevance of, course content and materials. However, I noted some key differences as well. Experts in my study drew attention to several potential areas of challenge that received little or no emphasis in the existing scholarly research. These themes included: time zone differences; issues related to technology, the internet and access; unconducive home learning environments; and experiences of aggressions, microaggressions, bias and stereotype threat.

**Difficulties with Language and Communication.** The majority of panelists suggested that international students experience challenges related to language and comprehension. Specific language-related challenges identified by experts included: keeping up with fast-paced lectures; being asked to repeat themselves when others could not understand their English; captions and alternative (alt) text written in English rather than their native language; and problems communicating with their instructors and classmates. A number of panelists mentioned that international students may struggle with comprehension when instructors and peers use unfamiliar vocabulary, jargon, slang, colloquialisms, or uniquely American expressions or references. One respondent pointed out that comprehension challenges apply at the visual level as well, such as when instructors or fellow students use icons or images that are unfamiliar to international students.

The unique nature of online learning presents another series of language- and comprehension-related challenges that were picked up on by several panelists. For
example, the limit or lack of non-verbal cues and body language can make it harder for international students to communicate as well as understand what is being communicated. One person also noted that there may be fewer opportunities for students to ask questions or clarify points of confusion in online learning environments, leading to greater frustration. The nature of online conferencing software also lends itself to communication challenges. Students may choose not to turn on their cameras and, even when they do, it can be difficult to discern physical cues from a patchwork of small tiles that make up the interface on Zoom (or other conferencing software).

A number of panelists highlighted consequences of language-related challenges in their responses, noting that these can affect student comprehension or their willingness to engage in both written or spoken discussions. One participant noted that those who are not native English speakers encounter a greater cognitive load when interacting in English with the content, the interface, the instructor, and their peers. For example, international students may need to mentally process class discussions in a language other than English and find that, by the time they are ready to contribute to the conversation, it has moved on to another topic. One respondent noted that the amount and complexity of academic reading and writing may require more time and energy for non-native speakers of English. This can prove additionally challenging in courses that follow rigid timelines and have little flexibility in deadlines. Another respondent shared that a fast-paced lecture—especially one without supporting on-screen text and images and live captions, or captioned recording available for review—makes comprehension and note taking extremely difficult for non-native speakers. A
Further consequence of language-related challenges noted by panelists is that international students may find it intimidating to reach out to the instructor for assistance or with questions. Therefore may not proactively seek—or receive—help when they need it.

**Inadequate Structure, Guidance and Responsiveness.** Challenges related to inadequate structure, guidance and responsiveness on the part of the instructor were not mentioned as extensively by experts in my study, compared to the coverage these challenges received in the scholarly literature. A few panelists suggested that weaknesses on the part of the instructor—such as a lack of online teaching skills; heavy reliance on one form of instruction (such as lecture); or the inability to create an effective course welcome and introduction—could negatively impact students. Another couple of panelists named lack of feedback as another area of concern. One specifically mentioned the example of an international student receiving a negative mark on a paper and no additional comments except that they should seek out the writing center. Two panelists mentioned that unclear assignments and difficulty understanding what was expected of them as a likely source of frustration for international students. Lastly, a participant specifically called out the fact that international students with disabilities, or diverse abilities, may not have remote access to adequate accommodations to perform all learning tasks.

**Unfamiliar Approaches to Learning and Assessment.** Several panelists suggested that international students may experience challenges due to unfamiliar approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment. For one, there may be overall U.S. academic
language, processes, and expectations that are unfamiliar to students and require
getting used to. Then there is the general nature of online learning, and the instructional
models used within it, and require time to adjust. Some panelists expressed concern
that international students may not assign the same value to online courses as they do
face-to-face courses, may have lower motivation to attend online classes, and may have
lower levels of attention when they do. One participant mentioned that students from
cultures that read right to left—or top to bottom—may be disoriented by online course
environments that use left to right navigation or reading sequences.

A few panelists suggested that the experiential and interactive models of
instruction that are used by many instructors in online courses might be unfamiliar to
international students. For example, activities that ask students to share their point of
view or ideas on the spot, rather than giving them time to reflect and write them down,
could prove challenging. One participant thought that some international students may
be intimidated or put off by discussion-based learning and constantly seeing their peers
with their hands raised, wanting to make comments. Another participant speculated
that international students might feel unmotivated in the face of what they may
perceive as overly competitive or individualistic approaches to class assignments.

A number of panelists commented on potential challenges international students
may encounter in group-based coursework, such as is frequently found in project-based
learning. For example, one participant shared that there may not be an immediate or
shared understanding among cross-cultural teammates of how to go about divvying up
tasks. Some native U.S. students may also display resistance to working with
international students on peer work, preferring to seek out students they perceive as more similar to themselves. Another panelist suggested that linguistic differences and language barriers could also have an impact on students working in small groups.

Lastly, a couple of panelists felt that differences in grading systems could be a source of frustration. One respondent also pointed out that any mismatch in expectations between an instructor and an international student is likely to result in negative consequences for the student, such as a poorer assessment of them or lower grades. The student, in other words, feels the repercussions more than the instructor.

Confusion about Academic Integrity and Plagiarism. Only one panelist mentioned the topic plagiarism, stating that international students may struggle in understanding the way in which U.S. academic culture has constructed plagiarism and its consequences. Another panelist addressed potential challenges associated with academic integrity more broadly. They commented that they have observed an increase in academic dishonesty accompanying the rise of online learning. Whereas it was much harder for students to cheat on pen and paper tests in a face to face environment, students in online environments have found innovative ways to share answers and papers with one another. This has an impact on student assessment and makes it more challenging for instructors to evaluate students’ true abilities. This issue is not unique to international students as online learners, although at times it can play out among them in unique ways such as when an international student uses dishonest means on a language proficiency exam to receive a score that does not accurately reflect their competency.
Feelings of Isolation and Invisibility. Many panelists discussed potential difficulties international students face related to a lack of feelings of belonging or connection, which can lead to a sense of isolation or invisibility. Among the challenges mentioned were those of fitting in socially with classmates when they are not familiar with the dominant culture; breaking into existing cliques in cohorts that are based on geographic, linguistic, or cultural similarities; and connecting with peers due to differences in context and time zones. One respondent pointed out that the acculturative stress that international students may experience as a result of interactions with peers and instructors can take its toll, prompting them to withdraw more from others.

The online environment can make it harder for students to pick up on and learn about tacit cultural rules shaping people’s interactions and expectations. Online classes also tend to offer students less opportunity to connect informally with one another before or after class. One participant pointed out that the online space can make it especially hard for international students to build relationships with their instructors or gain a sense of the instructors’ expectations about how they interact with them. As a result, one respondent noted, it is particularly important that the instructor make an effort to establish the course as a community of learners from the outset, so that everyone feels a sense of belonging and can communicate or collaborate effectively both within and outside of scheduled class time.

International students’ feelings of disconnection can negatively impact their motivation to interact with others online. Several panelists commented that students
may be more hesitant to speak up or participate in class discussions and activities as a result. In addition, they noted that international students may experience being ignored, overlooked or talked over when trying to contribute their perspective in class discussions or activities, which is also a disincentive to participate and can cause them to feel misunderstood or invisible. A few participants also mentioned that international students who feel isolated or ignored are less likely to reach out to their instructors or peers for help or with questions and, therefore, less likely to get the support they need.

**Lack of Representation and Relevance.** A number of panelists commented on challenges international students could face as a result of U.S. centric curricula and outlooks. Several respondents suggested that designs and content that center U.S. perspectives may not be applicable to the lives of students from different countries, which might make it hard for them to connect with the material and make the learning seem less relevant for them. This may prove especially true for international students taking classes from outside of the U.S. One respondent pointed out that course materials (including test banks) that are based on U.S. centric or Eurocentric perspectives may involve assumptions about what international students know about historical events or figures, idiomatic phrases, and the like. They may also require that students adopt a knowledge tradition or way of learning completely different from the ones they are familiar with.

Lack of representation can also increase student experiences of alienation of resentment. One respondent suggested that students may become frustrated with course materials that include few or no indigenous or non-Western perspectives.
Another pointed out that curricula that do not include the perspectives of persons of color can exacerbate feelings of exclusion felt by international students, particularly those from the global south.

**Time Zone Differences.** The potential challenges associated with differences between the time zones in which an international student is located versus where the institution or instructor are located was a theme that received the greatest number of mentions from experts in my study. In total, 17 panelists commented on it, a stark contrast to the two or three mentions the topic received in the scholarly literature that I reviewed. One possible reason for this difference is the increase in the number of international students taking courses online while residing outside of the U.S., brought about by the global COVID-pandemic. One issue brought up by panelists included the possibility of synchronous class meetings taking place at inconvenient or unreasonable times for students, which is not only challenging for individual students but also potentially disruptive for their family members, room or roommates. Other issues mentioned included challenges in coordinating group work with peers; attending office hours; meeting deadlines; completing exams; and receiving timely responses to critical questions.

**Issues with Technology, the Internet and Access.** Another potential area of challenge that received considerable attention from panelists in my study were issues related to technology and the internet, as well as access to these and other course tools and materials. This theme received little, if any, attention in the scholarly literature I reviewed in Chapter 2. Again, this difference may be because students have historically
resided in the U.S. while taking classes from U.S. institutions. It would have been likely, therefore, that many or most students would have access to the necessary technology and course materials—especially if they were residing on campus. While it still holds true that the majority of international students are residing in the U.S. while enrolled in their online courses (Martel, 2020), experiences shared by experts in this study point to potentially significant technology-related challenges for international students. For example, students may not have reliable access to laptops or computers and therefore might only use mobile devices for engaging in courses. This may result in limited access to aspects of the course, such as certain materials or interactions. Students could also experience connectivity challenges, as a result of unstable wifi or electricity or limited access to broadband internet. Depending on a students’ location, they may have to contend with firewalls that restrict their access to certain websites, software, or course materials. They may also deal with concerns related to privacy and the monitoring of their online activity by local governments.

International students may also encounter access limitations in other ways. One participant suggested that international students may have to pay exorbitant costs to get physical course materials (e.g., paper textbooks, at-home lab kits) shipped to them and may have to wait weeks for those materials to arrive. This delay can set them back academically. Another couple of respondents mentioned that access to library resources, such as texts and journals, could prove challenging to access for international students who are not on campus.
Lastly, a few panelists posed the idea that international students may lack knowledge of, or experience with, certain technologies, which could disadvantage them. For example, international students may not be familiar with certain applications (apps) or software that are commonly used in the U.S..

Unconducive Learning Environments. Unconducive home learning environments is another theme that did not receive mention in the scholarly literature, yet was identified as a potential area of challenge by experts in my study. Only four panelists addressed it, but it is an important area of consideration. By home learning environment, I mean the environment in which a student is located while they are participating in an online course. Unlike the structured environment of a physical classroom, which students experience collectively, home learning environments for online students vary broadly. Potential challenges that panelists identified included international students not having access to a quiet, private space for study in place of residence; distractions; and possible feelings of embarrassment about their home environment being visible to others in a synchronous session.

Experiences of Aggression, Microaggressions, Bias and Stereotype Threat. Seven panelists commented on challenges international students may face because of experiences of aggression, microaggressions, bias and stereotype threat. This topic received only limited mention in the scholarly literature that I reviewed. In that literature, only one study (Okusolubo, 2018) spoke to student experiences of racism and microaggressions, while a further two noted instructor interest in learning how to recognize their own biases and avoid stereotyping others (Morong & DesBiens, 2016;
Kung, 2017). The fact that the topic was more prevalent in responses in my study could be a result of growing recognition of and awareness around issues of equity and inclusion in online learning (Kelly & Zakrajsek, 2020). Two panelists named stereotype threat, which international students may experience from instructors or peers, as a potential challenge. One of these respondents elaborated on the threat, describing how international students might internalize instructor, institutional or others’ assumptions about them or their specific nationality, and experience this having a negative affect on their academic performance. Three panelists spoke to the challenges international students might experience as a result of bias, prejudice and/or racism at the hands of their peers. For example, native students may not engage with international students to the same extent they do with others. This could include not responding to them in online discussions or not wanting to work with them on group projects. One participant pointed out that native students might also engage in disruptive behavior directly toward or indirectly related to international students, such as by expressing biased or discriminatory statements in discussion forums. The response of another participant indicated that bias could also flow both ways, creating challenges in the process. International students may, for example, perceive U.S. students to be superficial, fake, or lazy, perceptions which could influence their desire to build relationships with them.

Lastly, a couple of panelists described potential challenges international students could experience because of bias or microaggressions embedded in the curriculum, or as a result of actions by the instructor. For example, students may encounter course materials or dominant narratives that portray or comment on their country, culture, or
identity inaccurately or offensively. Another respondent mentioned that international students might be subjected to what they termed “unfair requests”, such as being asked to represent or to speak on behalf of their culture, country, or other international students.

Experts in this study named a variety of challenges international students might encounter in online courses. These touched on areas including: difficulties with language and communication; inadequate structure, guidance and responsiveness on the part of the instructor; unfamiliar approaches to learning and assessment; confusion about academic integrity and plagiarism; feelings of isolation and invisibility; lack of representation in, and relevance of, course content and materials; time zone differences; issues related to technology, the internet and access; unconducive home learning environments; and experiences of aggressions, microaggressions, bias and stereotype threat. A notable way the findings from my study differ from those in the scholarly literature I reviewed, is that experts in this study highlighted challenges in the areas of access, equity and inclusion to a much greater extent.

**Instructor Challenges**

The scholarly literature I reviewed in Chapter 2 provided only limited findings on the challenges instructors encounter in teaching international students in online courses. However, experts in my study were able to draw on their own professional and scholarly experiences to provide meaningful insight into some of the potential difficulties instructors face. A total of twenty-six panelists answered the question. A number of themes emerged from their responses, both mapping to and expanding
beyond the three general themes I identified in the scholarly literature. These existing themes were difficulties with language and communication; differences between themselves and international students in expectations related to guidance, teaching, academic integrity, and social interactions; and failure to design content that is representative of and relevant to a multicultural audience. New themes that emerged included contending with differences in time zones, bandwidth and access; struggling to foster engagement; and increases in workload.

**Difficulties with Language and Communication.** Potential difficulties instructors may encounter related to language and communication topped the list of responses, with 16 panelists mentioning the topic. Panelists described how instructors may have difficulty communicating effectively with international students due to their use of colloquialisms, acronyms, uniquely American expressions, or academic language unfamiliar to students. Several participants also mentioned that the lack of body language and in-person interaction can make clear communication harder for all sides. Also, the absence of synchronous sessions—such when most or all of the course is offered asynchronously—can make it more challenging to identify and clear up miscommunications when they occur. One respondent pointed out that breakdowns in communication are frustrating for students and instructors alike.

**Differences in Expectations.** Several panelists highlighted potential challenges that arise when instructors and international students differ in their expectations around guidance, teaching, academic honesty, and social interactions. Instructors may find it challenging to communicate their expectations clearly in an online setting.
Instructors might feel challenged in helping international students navigate the online learning environment, especially if they are relatively new to it themselves. One respondent pointed out that the online environment makes it hard for instructors to recognize difficulties students are experiencing, making it harder for them to provide the needed support. Fewer interactions with students, for example, may lead to fewer opportunities to check in and make sure students are understanding the material.

Another pointed out that instructors may expect students who have questions or are struggling to make use of online office hours yet find that they do not take advantage of them.

In terms of differences in expectations around teaching and learning, a few participants commented that instructors may be unaware of different cultural traditions of learning, such as interdependent learning, and inadvertently set up courses that favor students with backgrounds in Western learning traditions, such as independent learning. Instructors may not know how to ensure their pedagogical approaches, as well as the technologies they use, work equally well with learners from a variety of cultures and who are located in a variety of environments. One respondent made the point that instructors might also not know how to help international students adapt to unfamiliar and potentially uncomfortable pedagogies, such as experiential or discussion-based learning. Another area in which instructors may struggle is in determining equitable grading practices especially, for example, if students struggle with language proficiency.

Only one participant commented on different expectations around academic integrity and they did so through the lens of student challenges, noting that a potential
area of difficulty is a lack of awareness with how the idea of plagiarism is constructed within U.S. academic contexts and the consequences that it bears. However, it is reasonable to assume that a related issue that instructors encounter is a lack of awareness that plagiarism is an idea that has been culturally constructed. For example, Szilagyi (2013) observed that the modern Western interpretation of authorship, originality and plagiarism have their roots in the industrial revolution, a time when innovation and ownership could generate considerable revenue. This latter point suggests that citation practices touch on deeper cultural and capitalist values of ownership and profit. International students who enter a U.S. academic space do not automatically know what it means or how to avoid it. Instructors may not realize that they have a part to play in helping international students understand and practice what is required of them.

Several participants mentioned potential challenges instructors may encounter related to differing expectations around social interactions with international students. Instructors may not realize that international student assumptions about the role of professor and student differ from their own. One expert mentioned that ideas such as gender roles, authority figures, and academic conventions all differ with culture. As a result, students may be more hesitant to approach instructors for help and instructors may not realize that they may need to take a more proactive stance in connecting with students. One participant noted that instructors need to make the effort to know who their students are, including important aspects of their identity, background, location, aspirations, strengths and challenges as a learner, as well as situational factors such as
living situation, work situation, and family responsibilities. Another participant mentioned that instructors may have difficulty adequately advising international students without this knowledge. A general lack of cultural awareness and cultural competency on the part of instructors, and how this plays out in relational interactions, was named as a potential problem by several panelists. For example, international students may have different ideas about ways to show respect. One participant gave the illustration that instructors may find being called Prof by students—rather than Professor and without an accompanying name—to be brash or offensive when it is intended to be a sign of respect.

As the panelists indicated, instructors may encounter a variety of challenges in teaching international students in online classes when their expectations about guidance, teaching, academic integrity, and social interactions differ. One participant summarized it well, explaining that training and preparation for instructors specifically related to teaching international students in online settings is often limited or nonexistent. As a result, instructors are likely to design courses that fail to attend to these challenges, resulting in a misalignment between their expectations and the actual outcome.

**Failure to Design Representative and Relevant Content.** A third area of challenge that surfaced in the scholarly literature and was reiterated by experts in my study, is a failure to design content that is representative of and relevant to a multicultural audience. Numerous panelists mentioned that instructors likely find it challenging to incorporate examples and materials that are relevant to the respective
field, industry or topic being studied and also relatable to students from a variety of backgrounds and contexts. One participant advised that instructors need to be willing to reflect on their use of language, cultural idioms, and metaphors to ensure that they are globally applicable. A few said that instructors need to make sure that the examples, instructions and content they use do not rely on direct experience with local (i.e. northern hemisphere) climate, seasons, flora, fauna, and culture. Yet, as one participant pointed out, it might be hard for instructors to know what is or is not relatable to students. It can be challenging for an instructor to know how to design a course in a way that builds the prior knowledge and skills of a highly diverse group of students. It can also be difficult, according to another participant, for instructors to expand their own viewpoint to include input from diverse cultures and perspectives, especially if these challenge or contradict their own ideas.

The importance of creating a welcoming online space, in which everyone can experience a sense of belonging, was also brought up by some panelists. One participant commented that instructors need to create an online space that affirms differing cultural backgrounds, communication styles, and the like. Another respondent pointed out that a common way that instructors make international students feel unwelcome is when they do not make the effort to pronounce their names correctly.

Experts in my study also identified that self-awareness and cultural competence are necessary if an instructor wants to create a welcoming online learning space and course content that is relevant to, and representative of, a diversity of students. Panelists pointed out that this level of self-awareness requires work and dedication on
the part of instructors. Instructors need to become aware of their personal blind spots and assumptions. They also need to come to recognize how cultural bias manifests in their speech patterns, course materials, and way of interacting that can negatively impact international students' understanding of course topics. Lastly, instructors also need to be willing to acknowledge and expunge their own prejudices. Two panelists shared anecdotes from their own experiences that illustrate some of the ways in which instructors harbor prejudice. One example was instructors who insinuated that the university had lowered its standards because they perceived that writing quality was lower among international students. Another example was instructors who approached their work with international students—in particular those from the Global South—with a deficit mindset or patronizing attitude.

**Contending with Time Zone, Bandwidth and Access Issues.** The themes of contending with time zone, bandwidth and access issues did not come up in my review of the scholarly literature, however numerous experts in my panel brought up challenges related to these. In terms of time zones, several panelists mentioned tensions associated with class management. For example, one participant highlighted the challenge of instructors needing to decide whether to hold a session synchronously at an internationally friendly time (e.g. one that technically works for everyone but is potentially inconvenient for most) or to only offer the course asynchronously as a way to preserve equity around this particular issue. Other respondents emphasized challenges instructors face in knowing how to connect with and support students who are working within a different time zone. Instructors may need to make themselves
available to meet with students at odd hours, if they are not able to attend scheduled office hours due to time zone differences. Instructors may also need to be more flexible with deadlines, if these are difficult for students located in alternate time zones to meet.

Bandwidth and access issues can also prove challenging for instructors to navigate. For example, a few panelists commented that instructors may need to help students find alternate means of accessing course content or submitting assignments if the student’s access to wifi, websites, or technological tools is limited. Another respondent brought up how bandwidth troubles can also affect or frustrate a class experience, for example if video features continually break up or freeze during class discussion. This can also exacerbate experiences of inequity if it only happens to some students—such as students residing outside of the U.S.—and not others.

**Struggling to Foster Engagement.** In the literature reviewed for this study, international students’ hesitancy to engage with course activities and participating in course discussions came up (Jin and Schneider, 2019; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Yang et al., 2014; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). However, it was mainly discussed from the perspective of students. Experts in my study identified it as an equal challenge for instructors. After all, if an instructor’s learning philosophy is primarily constructivist and their course design is built around student discussion, then a lack of student participation is problematic. Several panelists remarked on the fact that lower engagement of international students was a problem that instructors struggled to know how to deal with. One participant pointed out that instructors needed—but were not sure how to—address international students’ potential discomfort with the amount of peer-to-peer interaction and
discussion within U.S. courses. Another participant posed the challenge instructors face in ensuring equal time in class discussion for native and non-native English speakers.

One participant shared an observation related to participation and engagement that they experienced in their own practice. They mentioned that in the early days of the pandemic, when people were confined to their homes, international students in their courses were highly motivated to engage. However, more recently they had noticed a notable shift in students’ eagerness to participate in class discussions. This anecdote highlights the way in which instructors may need to navigate a variety of continuously changing factors in their efforts to encourage students to engage.

On a more general note, several participants brought up the fact that instructors might not possess adequate skills in the area of teaching or design, particularly when it comes to the skills needed for designing and facilitating online courses. These shortcomings could also limit their ability to effectively engage international students. One respondent mentioned that instructors might be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the online environment and the tools needed to navigate it successfully. For example, one respondent mentioned that instructors might have limited experience with necessitated software, such as those that can promote collaboration among students. Another participant commented that instructors may not be familiar with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is an essential framework for designing equitable and engaging online learning experiences. Instructors may also default to teaching in the way they were taught, suggested another participant, and be resistant to
trying other ways. As a result, they are unable or unwilling to meet differing learner needs.

**Increases in Workload.** A final issue that several experts mentioned, yet which was not as explicit in the existing research, is the challenge of increased instructor workloads. According to panelists, both the time for design and for facilitation increases when instructors account for diversity in their online classes. One participant shared that designing learning experiences for courses with diverse learners takes time and that—even if instructors have experience designing for and teaching international students—the time it takes to do so effectively and inclusively may still become a challenge if they have hectic schedules and heavy course loads. Another described that it takes instructors additional time and work to grade papers if the English-proficiency of students is subpar. Still another participant mentioned that a potential increase in the volume of emails instructors receive, with questions about the course, would make their workload feel more challenging. Instructor frustration may be exacerbated, suggested one respondent, if they perceive that their workload would be lighter if the course were populated primarily by U.S. students.

Real or perceived increases in workload are likely to have an effect on how instructors structure their courses and interact with participants. For example, one participant shared that a survey they organized on their campus revealed that some faculty found helping students navigate platforms like Zoom, the campus Learning Management System (LMS), or other online tools was so onerous that they opted to no longer use them in their courses. Another participant shared a personal anecdote about
how teaching asynchronous online courses has required them to completely restructure their schedule, as well as tools and techniques they use for teaching and engagement. Instead of teaching a once-a-week course, they now engage in the course and with students daily. Instead of a once-a-week block of office hours, they now offer them several times a week and at different times of day in order to be available to students in a variety of time zones. Instead of being able to build relationships with students by seeing them around campus or town, they now schedule regular informal online chat sessions in order to better get to know students. These shifts, the participant reported, are time consuming and yet their university seems to think that online learning is less demanding on instructors than in-person teaching. This last comment by the participant speaks to what is likely another significant challenge that online instructors face, namely that administrators misunderstand the level of effort and specialized skill required in teaching online courses effectively and equitably.

Although I did not initially intend to mine the data generated from question one of the round one questionnaire in my study, the thoughtfulness and expert insight provided by my panelists provided a rich source of information. By-and-large, their responses mapped to the findings discussed by researchers in the extant literature. In doing so, it serves to support those findings as well as reinforce the expertise of my panelists. I was also able to identify themes in the responses of my experts that were either not discussed or only touched on in a limited way in the existing literature. As a result, findings from this study serve to elaborate and build the existing body of knowledge about international student and instructor challenges in online courses.
Several new themes that emerged from this study’s data. One set of challenges identified that applied to both students and instructors was that of contending with time zone, bandwidth and access issues. In addition, experts named unconducive learning environments and encounters with aggression, microaggressions, bias and stereotype threat as some of the unique challenges facing students, and struggling to foster engagement and increases in workload as unique challenges facing instructors.

**Expert Identified Competencies**

Questions two and three were the central questions for round one, as it was the responses to these that would lay the foundation for the remainder of the study. In response to the question of *what specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills instructors need in order to design culturally inclusive online learning experiences for international students*, experts provided a total of 208 suggestions (80 pertaining to design knowledge, 71 for design attitudes, and 57 for design skills). In response to the question of *what specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills instructors need in order to facilitate culturally inclusive online learning experiences for international students*, experts provided a total of 173 suggestions (58 pertaining to facilitation knowledge, 57 for facilitation attitudes, and 58 for facilitation skills).

The goal of my analysis for round one was twofold: 1) distill the 381 knowledge, attitude and skills suggestions into manageable lists of items by combining similar ideas and eliminating duplicates or unclear responses; 2) phrase items as competencies. To

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3 Competency statements generally begin with a present tense action verb, include an object, and do not include evaluative or relative adjectives or adverbs such as effective, quickly, etc. (University of Texas
accomplish the first task, I looked for common themes in the responses and grouped the items according to these. I used NVIVO, a software program designed to help organize and analyze data, to code and sort items. After importing the data from round one into the software, I read through all of the items and assigned them broad level codes that corresponded to the questions they addressed. Next, I read through all of the responses again to confirm the accuracy of the initial codes I had assigned. After this, I took each of the six competency areas (design knowledge; design attitudes; design skills; facilitation knowledge; facilitation attitudes; and facilitation skills) and coded for patterns within these (see Appendix J, NVIVO Codes). I tracked my progress along with any decisions I made with daily entries in a Research Diary. An entry from May 5, 2021 provides a glimpse into my coding and sorting process:

I've completed coding the DESIGN KNOWLEDGE items. General patterns I see include addressing aspects of cultural difference, differences in online vs f2f pedagogy and context, differences in country contexts (such a time zones, access, etc), as well as highlighting more general knowledge such as technology, pedagogical approaches, student needs, and student disabilities...As a first pass at categories, here's what I've come up with: technology; pedagogy (approaches to T&L such as UDL, CRT, etc); student needs; instructor (dis)position (such as self-awareness, anti-racism, etc); cultural differences (or cultural influence on...);

School of Public Health, 2012). An example competency statement is: Allow students to focus assignments on issues related to their interests or communities.
geopolitical differences (such as time zones, current events, etc). (Researcher Diary entry, 5/5/2021)

Once I had completed coding each of the six competency areas, I intended to group the items within each area according to similar themes and ideas. At this point, NVIVO became more cumbersome than useful, so I transferred the responses into six separate Microsoft Word documents. Starting with the design knowledge items, I began to refine each of the lists by grouping similar concepts; merging and wordsmithing the items into competencies; eliminating repetition; and ensuring that items fit appropriately into their respective knowledge, attitude or skill category assigned to them.

Some panelists struggled with the distinction between knowledge, attitudes and skills when making their initial responses. For example, “basic interface design and technical writing skills so that the online environment is easy to use and accessible across cultures” was listed by one participant as a suggestion for knowledge, but seemed to fit better within the skill category. More problematic, though, was that a number of panelists also struggled in making a distinction between competencies for design and competencies for facilitation. Six of the 29 participants made specific comments stating that the knowledge, attitudes, and/or skills they listed for design also applied to facilitation (e.g. writing “see prior answers” or “similar to previous page”). Responses from a further eight participants included the same or a high degree of similarity in the knowledge, attitudes or skills they listed for design as in the ones they listed for facilitation. This required that I make a decision whether to maintain a
distinction between design and facilitations competencies going forward. Given the significant parallels between the responses for design and facilitation competencies, I decided to combine the two categories. I was concerned that the repetition caused by keeping them separate would make the competency lists long and unwieldy and frustrate the panelists in round two.

Once the design and facilitation categories were combined and the items refined into competency statements, I had a list of 100 competency statements. This list included 30 knowledge competencies, 24 attitude competencies, and 44 skill competencies. Since panelists would be asked to review and rate the helpfulness of each item in the next round, I opted to further organize the list by loosely sorting the competencies into five general categories. The five categories consisted of (a) Educational Philosophy; (b) Technical / Design; (c) Curriculum / Content; (d) Instructional Activities; and e) Relational Connection / Support (see Appendix F, Complete Competency Matrix). As a result, rather than reading through a list of 100 items, participants would be able to review and rate the items in more manageable groups of 16-24 at a time.

Round Two Data Analysis

Likert-type Ranking Responses

Question one asked experts to: Please rate the level of helpfulness of each item on a 5-point scale: (a) not at all helpful; (b) slightly helpful; (c) moderately helpful; (d) very helpful; (e) extremely / most helpful. Panelists had the option to provide additional comments for the selections they made, such as a rationale for their choice, questions,
or suggestions. The purpose of this question was to allow me to further refine the list of competencies by using the resulting scores to trim away the less helpful ones. Responses to this question also helped to highlight areas of agreement and disagreement among the panelists (Ludwig, 1994).

To analyze the ratings, I first created a separate table of all of the items and comments associated with each. This way I could more easily read through participants' responses and see them in light of other panelist's comments. Next, I exported the responses into a spreadsheet and replaced the rating terms with the following numerical values: (a) Most/Extremely helpful became 5; (b) Very helpful became 4; (c) Moderately helpful became 3; (d) Slightly helpful became 2; (e) Not at all helpful became 1. Using these values, I then calculated the mean, mode and median for each item along with the standard deviation (see Appendix I, Round 2 Competency Rating Results). It was evident from analyzing the modes, that the majority of panelists rated most items either very or extremely helpful. The mode is the most frequently occurring number within a set of numbers. For 58 of the 100 items, a rating of 5 (extremely / most helpful) was the most frequently occurring rating and a rating of 4 (very helpful) was the most frequently occurring rating for 39 of the items. Only three of the items had a rating of 3 (moderately helpful) as the mode and none registered ratings of 2 (slightly helpful) or 1 (not at all helpful) as the mode. In fact, only five items received any not at all helpful ratings, with four of these items receiving one such vote each and one item receiving two not at all helpful votes.
Although these results signaled high levels of agreement on a large number of items, it made it challenging for me to determine how to trim the list. Using the simple rule of majority, I decided to retain the items that were rated as either extremely helpful or very helpful by greater than 50% of respondents. The resulting retained list consisted of 52 competencies, including 15 knowledge items, 17 attitude items, and 20 skill items (see Appendix J, 52 Final Competencies List). One benefit of trimming the list in this way was that it maintained a fairly balanced distribution of items within the three categories.

Validation Responses

For question two, I asked experts: Do you feel that your contributions from Round 1 are fairly represented in the competency list provided for Round 2? If they selected no as their answer, I further prompted them to describe what ideas or important nuances I had left out, overlooked or misrepresented. The purpose of this question was to verify that the interpretations I made from their round one responses were accurate and appropriate and whether panelists were satisfied with the way I had distilled their input into collective competency statements. Twenty-four out of the 25 panelists replied that, yes, they felt their contributions were fairly represented. One of these respondents added that they appreciated the additions from other panelists. However, one panelist replied that, no, they did not feel that their contributions had been fairly represented. As an explanation for their answer, they stated that they were “surprised at how much these were elaborated in this round since I didn't provide this level of detail”. Based on this response, I felt that it was likely that the participant had not understood that the aim of round one had been to combine and refine the
responses provided by all of the panelists in order to create a comprehensive list. The positive response by 96% of experts affirming that their input was adequately reflected in the competencies served to validate the list I had created (Lodico, 2010). Given this, and the likelihood that the one exception was based on a misunderstanding of the task at hand, I felt that it was appropriate to proceed with the existing list.

**Experts’ Assessment of Missing Competencies.**

For question three, I asked experts: *Are there any key knowledge, attitudes or skills missing from the competency list that you would like to see added?* Only a handful of participants provided a response, while the majority chose to leave this field blank. Three participants commented that they felt the list was comprehensive and robust. One participant wanted to emphasize the importance of listening as a skill and the value of being present to who is virtually in the room. They added that it felt unrealistic to expect faculty members to become expert interculturalists. Another participant commented that they wanted to see more competencies dealing with cultural self-awareness, such as how one's own worldview impacts interactions, awareness of one's own communication styles, etc. They also felt there could be more competencies related to conflict resolution skills, non-verbals, critical thinking, as well as attitudes such as adaptability, flexibility, respect, and curiosity. A third participant mentioned that, while they felt it was implied in one of the items, it could be helpful to be more explicit in stating the importance of acknowledging, rather than denying, experiences of anxiety or feeling outside of one’s comfort zone in order to better manage these experiences. A fourth participant wanted to emphasize the importance of making one’s
expectations for all aspects of learning and instruction explicit. A fifth participant wished for a way to acknowledge that placing the burden of success on the actions of the individual student or faculty maintains the agenda of the neoliberal university. Rather than expecting changes at a micro level, such as those that can be achieved by training or technology, the participant wanted to see greater willingness by universities to engage in structural shifts that would address some of the issues targeted by the proposed competencies.

These additional suggestions provided valuable insight into participants’ thought processes. However, since none of the additional ideas were picked up by more than one respondent it did not seem to merit creating new competencies to add to the list. In other words, none of the suggestions constituted glaring gaps. I also felt that some suggestions—such as the call for flexibility, respect, and curiosity—were already represented in the existing competencies, while others—such as the call for structural shifts on the part of universities—were outside the scope of this project. As such, I did not add additional items to the list. Therefore, the list that resulted from round two included 52 competencies that panelists deemed as very or extremely helpful.

Round Three Data Analysis

Q-Sort Ranking Responses

For round three, I shared the list of 52 competencies back to panelists and asked them to rank them from most to less essential using three Q sorts: one for knowledge competencies, one for attitude competencies, and one for skill competencies. Completing each Q-sort involved sorting items into columns on a pyramid-shaped grid,
in order from most essential to less essential. To analyze the results, I assigned each column of the Q-sorts a numerical value. Both the knowledge and the attitude Q-sorts, contained seven columns, so for these the assigned values ranged from one (for the least essential column) to seven (for the most essential column). The skills Q-sort contained nine columns, therefore the assigned values for these ranged from one (for the least essential column) to nine (for the most essential column). I assigned points to each competency statement, based on the rankings provided by the panelists, and then tallied these points to calculate a final score for each. Lastly, I organized these into lists in order from highest-ranking to lowest-ranking competency statements (see Appendix, Q-Sort Rankings).

It is important to recall that all of the items were rated by the panelists to be either extremely or very helpful in the previous round. Therefore, all items on the list are important. However, the items with the highest scores reflect the competency statements that experts deemed to be most essential in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students.

**Experts’ Comments on Ranking Activity**

After completing each Q-sort, panelists were given a space to provide optional comments such as an explanation for any of their rankings, responses to peer comments from the previous round, etc. Three panelists commented that they found the Q-sort task difficult as they felt that all items were essential. One even stated that they felt bad when they put items that they considered important on lower rungs than others.
Several other panelists offered a variety of comments, shared below, that provided insight into their reasoning and thought processes during the exercise.

In reflecting on their responses to the knowledge Q-sort, two experts commented that they saw a lot of similarities in the competency statements. One noted that, in lieu of the overlap, they chose to assign lower rankings to items that they felt were covered by other, higher ranked, items. The other expert commented that their strategy, when faced with similar items, was to prioritize the one that served a greater number of students.

One expert observed that they consistently ranked the knowledge competency statement addressing translation technology as low, despite a strong belief in the importance of understanding linguistic and cultural differences between instructors and students. The expert offered the reflection that they based their ranking based on an interpretation of the question as relating specifically to the technology. It is still essential, in their opinion, to support and build the students' ability to work in English. However, in their experience of having worked with many international students over a number of years, they had rarely found that language issues are an actual barrier or a burden for the instructor despite the prevailing belief that they are.

In reflecting on the attitude Q-sort, one expert commented that the competency statements seem to have more to do with teaching than with design. Two other experts elaborated on their ranking strategies. One of these shared that they assigned a higher rank to those that would enable the attitudes they ranked as less essential. For example, they assigned a higher ranking to the statement that intellectual discussions are
enriched by multiple perspectives from around the world because they felt this would help facilitate the competency statement to seek out new ways of engaging and supporting those attitudes. Another expert shared that they made the decision to downgrade items in their Q-sort rankings when they agreed with one part of a statement but not the other. This expert also mentioned that they found the comments from their fellow experts useful, especially when it came to helping them clarify problematic statements by thinking through the strands or assumptions within a given statement.

One expert mentioned that they went back to compare their ranking of the attitude competency statements in the Q-sort to the cumulative ratings the items had received during the round two exercise. They found that their top three selections for the Q-sort coincided with the items ranked as second, third and fourth on the round two list. However, the item in the top place on that list—believe that student diversity enriches the learning space—they had ranked as lowest in their Q-sort. The expert explained that in their experience of teaching very diverse groups of learners, they found this recommended competency to be somewhat naive. Yes, diversity can be enriching; however, it often also complicates learning by placing additional demands on an instructor’s attention and making it more difficult for them to attend to a variety of learners’ needs. In the expert’s opinion, they felt that instructors can create welcoming learning spaces through their attitudes, actions, and strategies. However, there is no need for instructors to deny the challenges that can accompany instructing groups of highly diverse learners.
In reflecting on their response to the skills Q-sort, one expert shared that they found this set of competencies especially difficult to rank. In their opinion, all were equally essential. Another expert shared that for this sort, as well as the other two, they ranked competency statements that were especially relevant to teaching online in an international context higher than those they felt were related to good teaching in general and good teaching in an online context lower. However, this was not because these latter competencies are any less essential, in their opinion, but rather reflected their effort to emphasize the competencies specific to teaching international students online.

**Experts’ Suggestions for Missing Essential Competencies**

The final question asked experts to identify if there were any competencies not included from the previous round that they strongly felt should still have been included on the final lists. A couple of participants offered suggestions for each of the three categories.

In regard to missing competencies related to knowledge, one panelist commented that they were surprised that using a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework (i.e. *be familiar with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a flexible approach to teaching that uses multiple means of representation, engagement and expression*) had not made the final list. They reflected that this may be because experts doing this work would already be using it, and therefore there would not be a need to prioritize it. This same panelist also felt that the competency *knowledge of holidays or other major cultural events that students observe and that will take place during the*
course was essential and should have a place on the final list. Another expert mentioned that they did not see any items on the list that addressed structural racism that students might encounter at their institution. They also voiced concern over the fact that not all international students receive the same support, which could be evidence of benevolent racism or neo-racism at play. An example from their experience included a faculty member who may offer extra support to a student from Zimbabwe, which utilizes English as the primary language in education, yet did not do the same for a student from Korea, though they had only ever studied in Korean.

In regard to missing competencies related to attitudes, one expert felt that the statement to be accommodating to students who need additional time or assistance for assignments and assessments should have made the list. They found it relevant not only for teaching international students, but also in the face of the COVID pandemic and its related crises. Though not a specific statement previously included in the process, another expert felt that perhaps there should be a competency related to being open to understanding White Supremacist ways of being and how to dismantle these in one’s approaches to instruction and interactions.

Lastly, in regard to missing competencies related to skills, two experts weighed in. One felt there should be a competency related to actively working to be an anti-racist. Another expert expressed that peer-to-peer learning opportunities—when appropriately designed and supported—were a useful tool and wished that the competency to create peer-to-peer learning opportunities had made the final list.
Although important, none of the ideas were advocated for by more than one expert. Therefore, I decided not to add them back to the list.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I described the processes I used to analyze my data and summarized the results. By drawing on the input of my panel of experts, I was able to determine a list of requisite instructor knowledge, attitudes, and skills; vet and rate an extensive list of competency in terms of their usefulness in promoting inclusion; and finally to distill these into a list of most essential competencies. The finalized list of requisite competencies consisted of 52 statements, including 15 knowledge items, 17 attitudes items, and 20 skill items. Using the scores from a Q-sort ranking exercise, I ordered the three lists from most to less essential. Although all of the competencies are important, the ones at the top of the lists indicated those that experts deemed to be most essential in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students. In Chapter 5, I will examine these results in greater detail and discuss my interpretation and potential implications of the findings.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

In this study, I set out to identify what competencies higher education instructors at U.S. institutions need in order to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students. In the preceding chapters, I communicated the background and significance of the problem, situated the research in the context of existing scholarly literature, described my methodology, and presented the results of my data collection. In this chapter, I discuss my interpretation of the results, highlight conclusions and limitations, speculate on the implications of this research for practice, and offer some recommendations for future research.

Over the past two decades, higher education has seen both a rapid rise in online course offerings and an increase in the cultural diversity of online students. With the onset of the global pandemic in 2020, learner diversity expanded even more as large numbers of international students enrolled in online courses both from within and from outside of the U.S. (Baer & Martel, 2020). Although it is exciting that learners from around the world are participating in U.S. higher education in ways that were unthinkable even a few decades ago, it also presents new challenges. The increasing diversity of students enrolled online requires courses that are designed with cultural inclusiveness in mind. Yet many instructors are unprepared for this shift. To date, there are no comprehensive frameworks or models to help guide instructors teaching international students in online courses.
This research was an attempt to begin to address this knowledge gap. Using a three-round Delphi study, I sought the input of 29 scholars and practitioners to develop a list of requisite instructor competencies. These panelists hailed from across the U.S. and were experienced in international education, international student support services, intercultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and instructional design for online learning.

**Discussion**

This Delphi process I utilized was largely successful in answering the three research questions that I identified at the outset of my study. These questions were:

**RQ1:** What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to *design* online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

**RQ2:** What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to *facilitate* online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?

**RQ3:** What instructor competencies do experts believe are most essential to improving international students’ online learning experiences and environment?

In the sections that follow, I discuss how my findings address each of these research questions. Included in this discussion is an analysis of how these findings relate to the student challenges I identified in the scholarly literature, as well as how these expert-proposed competencies align with existing research-based practice.
recommendations. I also offer commentary on the competencies and on some of the surprises, gaps, and realizations that I uncovered in my research process. Finally, I use the opportunity to revise some of the expert-proposed competencies in order to eliminate overlap and redundancy within the original list of competencies.

One surprise, which I encountered in the early stages of data collection, proved consequential for the remainder of my data collection and analysis processes. My research questions distinguished between design and facilitation, as these are two distinct operations in online learning. The former concerns itself with the creation of the structure and content of a course, while the latter is focused on delivery. However, it became clear in panelist responses to the round one questionnaire, that some respondents struggled to distinguish between competencies that instructors need in order to design culturally inclusive online courses and ones they need in order to effectively facilitate them. In an effort to mitigate potential confusion or frustration for the panelists, I decided to combine the two domains for the remainder of the data collection process.

In speculating as to why some panelists struggled in distinguishing between the two, I initially assumed it could be the result of differences in their backgrounds, roles and responsibilities. I thought that perhaps those participants who are faculty members, and who are used to both designing and facilitating their own courses, might see less of a distinction between the two domains. On the other hand, I thought that those panelists who were experienced instructional designers might have less trouble delineating between design and delivery. Yet when I looked at the identities of those
who had responded with either confusion or similar competencies for design and facilitation, their roles were split fairly equally among faculty members and designers. This led me to conclude that the individualistic and linear nature of the Delphi process that I asked panelists to engage in may have caused confusion for some. Perhaps if panelists had been able to converse directly with one another as they brainstormed, they might have been able to talk through their questions and uncertainties. In other words, a more collaborative approach might have been beneficial for some of the panelists. Another factor is that there is some overlap between the competencies required for design and those required for facilitation. Some participants may have found it frustrating or futile to try to parse elements that they perceived as integrated.

In interpreting my research findings, I opted to divide the competencies back into the domains of design and facilitation. To accomplish this step, I sorted the 52 competency statements into ones that I saw as aligning most closely to the processes involved in either design (25) or facilitation (24). I used tasks and activities associated with each phase to help me assign each item to a category. Three of the competency statements seemed equally important for both design and facilitation, so I left these in a shared category.

Sorting the competencies in this way allowed me to complete a task that I believe panelists would have achieved, had the nature or timing of my research process been different. It also allowed me to better answer my initial research questions as well as format my findings in a way that makes them more accessible to instructors. Anchoring the competencies within the practices involved in the design and facilitation
of online courses makes them more immediately recognizable and usable for instructors who want to ensure their online courses are more culturally inclusive. Lastly, in shifting the discussion to competencies involved in design and those involved in facilitation, I was able to move away from the distinction between knowledge, attitude and skill competencies. Framing the competencies in this way—which I had done as a way to ensure that panelists considered all aspects of what instructors need to know, believe and do in order to practice cultural inclusion—had generated a considerable amount of overlap among the proposed competencies. This led a number of participants to comment, at different points in the study, on the repetitive aspects of the statements. By re-organizing them as design and facilitation competencies, I was able to eliminate some of the redundancy.

Research Question 1: Design Competencies

My first research question was: what competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to design online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students? I defined design as the process of creating and structuring learning content, activities and assessment. Design involves activities commonly thought of as course planning and preparation, which generally take place before the start of a course (although design can also be adapted in light of new information and circumstances once a course has begun). Tasks and responsibilities commonly associated with designing an online course include: selecting objectives, content and materials; considering learner backgrounds and needs; choosing learning
and assessment activities; structuring and sharing course components; utilizing online processes and tools; and being self-aware and reflexive in one’s design practice.

To determine which competencies reflect knowledge, attitudes and skills that are essential to the course design phase, I mapped the statements to specific tasks and activities involved in the course design process. This process led me to categorize 25 of the 52 statements as competencies essential for the design of culturally inclusive online courses and support the success of international students. Table 5 lists the items I classified as design competencies. The categories to which I assigned each competency were not intended to be hard and fast. In some cases, a particular knowledge, attitude or skill/behavior could be useful for a variety of tasks and activities associated with design. In these instances, I opted to include it in the category where I felt it was most relevant. Each category is discussed in detail below.

Table 6

Competencies Essential for the Design of Culturally Inclusive Online Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selecting Content and Materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Recognize cultural assumptions and biases that underlie the course discipline and topics (knowledge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Exhibit a growth mindset to seek out new types of content for your course (attitude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Have knowledge of the subject matter in a global light (i.e. outside of a U.S. or primarily Western context) (knowledge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Be familiar with multiple perspectives on the course topics (knowledge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Include and/or invite multiple perspectives around course topics (skill/behavior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Exhibit enthusiasm for diverse global perspectives about course topics (attitude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Integrate culturally relevant resources into course content (skill/behavior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Include media that are representative of different cultures, races and ethnicities (skill/behavior)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considering Learner Backgrounds and Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Have knowledge of students’ unique contexts and backgrounds and how these may influence their learning online (e.g. educational; economic; cultural; social; technological; disability; etc.) (knowledge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Exhibit compassion for students who are unfamiliar with U.S. class format by adapting the course design to their needs (attitude)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Articulate the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are needed for the course and recommendations for what students can do if they lack some of these (skill/behavior)

Caption videos or make use of captioning services (skill/behavior)

Be familiar with resources the institution offers to international students and how students can make the best use of general academic and non-academic student support services (knowledge)

Choosing Teaching, Learning and Assessment Activities

- Be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that promote access and inclusion (knowledge)
- Be aware of concerns around the equity of various assessment methods (knowledge)
- Accept that different learners benefit from different teaching methods (attitude)
- Allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge so that evidence of mastery does not privilege some students over others (skill/behavior)
- Utilize equity rubrics that take a diverse set of students into account (skill/behavior)

Utilizing Online Processes and Tools

- Be familiar with key ways online pedagogy and teaching methods differ from face-to-face pedagogy and teaching (knowledge)
- Be aware of types of practical and emotional support that students need in order to acclimate to an online course (knowledge)
- Humanize the online environment using appropriate technological tools (skill/behavior)
- Recognize the pros and cons of a range of technological tools and how their utility can vary depending on the context, users and way in which a tool is used (knowledge)
- Have familiarity with translation engines in order to understand the pros and cons students encounter when they use them (knowledge)

Being Self-aware and Reflexive in Designing Online Courses

- Have cultural humility to acknowledge that your course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing (attitude)
- Be willing to seek out and learn from critiques of your online course designs (attitude)

Selecting Content and Materials

One important function of a course instructor is to select content and materials for their courses that align with the specified course learning objectives. Eight of the competencies proposed by experts in my study offered suggestions for how instructors can engage with these tasks in ways that are culturally inclusive. These competencies were that instructors (a) recognize cultural assumptions and biases that underlie the course discipline and topics; (b) exhibit a growth mindset to seek out new types of content for their course; (c) have knowledge of the subject matter in a global light; (d) be familiar with multiple perspectives on the course topics; (e) include and/or invite multiple
perspectives around course topics; (f) exhibit enthusiasm for diverse global perspectives about course topics; (g) integrate culturally relevant resources into course content; and (h) include media that are representative of different cultures, races and ethnicities.

The first of these competencies emphasizes the importance of acknowledging that all academic disciplines are shaped by underlying cultural biases and assumptions as well as the importance of an instructor recognizing specifically what these are for the topic at hand. This competency is crucial, as it speaks to the influential role culture plays in how humans construct and acquire knowledge. It is also foundational, in that it undergirds a number of the other competencies in this category. A second competency that is foundational to the design of culturally inclusive courses is for instructors to adopt a growth mindset and seek out new and different types of content for their courses. This competency serves as a reminder to instructors that disciplines and knowledge are continually evolving. As we advance in our understanding of the role culture plays in what and how we learn, so will our recognition of the need for greater diversity in course content. Instructors need to be willing to meet this challenge with a readiness to grow and change.

The next five competencies in this category offer suggestions for how instructors can make their content more representative and relevant to international students. All speak to the idea that, in order to be culturally inclusive, instructors need to make deliberate efforts to seek out and understand a variety of perspectives on what they are teaching. In particular, instructors should be conscientious to seek out the voices of scholars and practitioners from non-Western perspectives, such as indigenous voices
and those from the Global South, whose views are often absent or drowned out in Western-dominated discourses (Kloß, 2017). Though the different formulations of these competency statements reflect subtle nuances—for example it could be argued that being familiar with multiple perspectives speaks to essential knowledge an instructor needs for designing content, whereas exhibiting enthusiasm and inviting multiple perspectives are important attitudes and behaviors to enact while facilitating the class—I opted to combine them into a single statement to reduce redundancy. The revised statement combining these four competencies states that instructors should include a variety of perspectives and culturally relevant resources into the course content, paying attention to global/non-Western views.

The last competency I included in this category is that instructors should include media that are representative of different cultures, races and ethnicities. This suggestion speaks to issues of representation and relevance in course content and materials. Being culturally inclusive in their media selections involves instructors making sure there is broad representation in the ethnicities, nationalities and cultures portrayed. Blight (2019) observed that white people are frequently unaware of the extent to which whiteness dominates visual media. Instructors should pay attention to who appears in visual aspects of a course, such as images or videos and make sure that portrayals of diversity in selected media are appreciative, validating and liberating in their tone and not exacerbating students’ experiences of microaggressions and racism (Okusolubu, 2018).
These eight expert-proposed competencies align with a research-based practice recommendation previously identified in the scholarly literature, which was to incorporate diverse examples, comparative perspectives and a range of case studies into course content and activities (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017; Kung, 2017). The fact that a lack of diversity in course content and materials is being called out by a multitude of voices indicates a clear need in this area. By putting these competencies into practice, instructors can begin to address challenges international students experience related to a lack of representation and relevance of course content, as well as some of their feelings of isolation and invisibility. Specifically, they can increase the cultural diversity reflected in curriculum and materials, promote a greater appreciation for multicultural perspectives, and ease students’ experiences of marginalization and invisibility (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017). In doing so, instructors will not only help international students to better connect with and utilize the material that they are learning, but ultimately create a stronger curriculum for all learners.

**Considering Learner Backgrounds and Needs**

Contemporary learning theories emphasize that there is diversity among learners in areas such as previous knowledge and experience, motivation, and existing abilities (Gagné et al., 2005; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2020) and that designers and instructors have an obligation to take into account these learner differences in their course design process (Dick, Carey & Carey, 2009; Gagné et al., 2005; Morrison et al., 2013). Five of the competencies proposed by experts in this study speak to the important task of considering learner backgrounds and needs, namely that instructors
should: (a) have knowledge of students’ unique contexts and backgrounds and how these may influence their learning online; (b) exhibit compassion for students who are unfamiliar with U.S. class format by adapting the course design to their needs; (c) articulate the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are needed for the course and recommendations for what students can do if they lack some of these; (d) caption videos or make use of captioning services; and (e) be familiar with resources the institution offers to international students and how students can make the best use of general academic and non-academic student support services.

The first competency advises instructors to get to know more about their students and consider how a students’ context and background may influence their learning process. One way that instructors can do this is by conducting a brief learner assessment before or at the outset of a course (Liu et al., 2010). Awareness of students’ educational background and expectations will help instructors better understand students’ unique contexts as well as gauge what additional support might benefit them. Some of the areas of students’ lives that experts felt were important that instructors understand were their educational, economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as things like technological know-how or areas of disability. By knowing more about their students, instructors can practice the second competency in this category, which is to be compassionate towards those who are unfamiliar with processes and expectations around online learning in the U.S. and to be willing to adjust the course design to meet students’ needs. By knowing more about their students’ backgrounds, instructors can begin to address all of the areas of challenge identified in the scholarly literature,
including difficulties with language and communication; differences in expectations about instructor guidance and responsiveness; difficulties adapting to unfamiliar approaches to teaching, learning and assessment; potential confusion about academic integrity and plagiarism; feelings of isolation and invisibility; and frustration at the lack of representation and relevance of course content and materials. For example, instructors can determine whether it might be helpful to offer students supplementary readings to aid their comprehension (Mahalingappa et al., 2021); take time to explain acronyms and cultural references (Mahalingappa et al., 2021; Zhang & Kenny, 2010); offer take-home exams to allow students more time to complete them (Mahalingappa et al., 2021); or moderate their pace of speaking (Kung, 2017).

The three remaining competencies in this category offer suggestions for specific ways instructors can address differences in students’ backgrounds and experiences. It is unreasonable to assume that all learners enter a course with the same foundational knowledge or skills in place. By articulating what their assumptions are for what students should already know and be able to do, instructors help students recognize whether they are adequately equipped for the course. By providing suggestions for how students can meet requirements they may be lacking or wish to brush up on, instructors make entry into the course more equitable for all students. Next, by making sure that the videos they are using have captions, instructors ensure that the videos are accessible to learners with a diversity of needs. For international students, captions can be helpful to mitigate language and communication difficulties. Those whose first language is not English may find it especially useful to hear the words while also seeing
the text. Lastly, by knowing what academic and non-academic student support services their institution has available to international students, instructors can help connect students to additional resources. For example, instructors may be able to refer to a campus writing center or relevant workshops those international students who experience challenges as a result of differences between their home and host culture in writing conventions (Okusolubo, 2018) or unfamiliar and complicated citation processes (Szilagyi, 2013) Though distinct in their focus, each of these three competencies contribute something useful to the process of designing culturally inclusive online courses.

**Choosing Teaching, Learning and Assessment Activities**

Choosing activities for teaching, learning and assessment is another function of a course instructor and one that requires forethought and intention. Five of the competencies suggested by experts in this study speak to this aspect of designing a course, including that instructors should (a) be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that promote access and inclusion; (b) be aware of concerns around the equity of various assessment methods; (c) accept that different learners benefit from different teaching methods; (d) allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge so that evidence of mastery does not privilege some students over others; and (e) utilize equity rubrics that take a diverse set of students into account.

The importance of an instructor being familiar with pedagogies that promote access and equity, such as anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies, is essential to
the creation of culturally inclusive online courses. The emphasis experts in this study placed on this set of skills is a unique contribution to the existing research on teaching international students. Current scholarship and conventional practice underscore the importance of intercultural competence and intercultural communication in working with international students (Morong & DesBien, 2016; Sadykova, 2012; Yeh et al., 2021). The ability to function effectively across cultures, think and act appropriately, and communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds is important (Leung et al., 2014). However, it fails to address prejudice and discrimination, such as nativism and racism, that can be found in the content and approaches to teaching in U.S. higher education (Yao et al., 2018). There is substantial scholarly evidence that international students encounter racism, xenophobia and other forms of prejudice in their U.S. higher education experiences (Glass et al., 2015; Holliday, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007; Okusolubo, 2018; Yao et al., 2018). There is also evidence to suggest that often students’ culturally shaped ways of learning and knowing are not recognized or affirmed, especially when these differ from those of the dominant norm (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017; McAlister-Shields, 2020; Paris, 2012; Szilagy, 2013). Countering these discriminatory forces requires an active stance on the part of instructors and one way they can implement this active stance is via the pedagogical choices they make.

A second competency, related to the idea of using pedagogies that promote access and inclusion, is that instructors should be aware of concerns around the equity of various assessment methods. Another way to phrase this competency is that instructors should be familiar with a variety of approaches to assessment that are
equitable and accessible. Assessment processes are imbued with cultural values and assumptions. For example, assigning students grades for their participation in discussion boards or class discussions in a common practice in online courses (De Vita, 2000). However, international students may not engage in discussions at the same level as their American peers for a variety of reasons that are not related to their mastery of a subject (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Liu et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2014; Zhang, 2013; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). To evaluate students in this way, then, may be both false and unfair. By incorporating more equitable approaches to assessment, instructors can address some of the challenges international students encounter when subjected to unfamiliar assessment strategies (Liu et al. 2010; Smith, 2021) and ease some of the frustrations they experience when conventions from their home and host cultures do not align (Okusolubo, 2018).

The next two competencies in this category are related to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is an approach to teaching and learning that aims to give all students equal opportunities at academic success and a framework that guides best-practices for online learning. UDL guidelines suggest that, in choosing learning and assessment activities, instructors should tap into student engagement in multiple ways, represent what they are teaching in multiple ways, and offer students multiple ways to interact with and demonstrate mastery of the material (Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014). The competencies stating that instructors should accept that different learners benefit from different teaching methods and that they should allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge so that evidence of mastery does not
privilege some students over others align with these principles. These ideas also align with the research-based practice recommendation that suggest instructors utilize a variety of approaches, modalities and digital tools for teaching and learning and provide a rationale for the ones chosen (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020b; Kung, 2017). Due to the similarities, I combined them into one competency, namely that instructors should use a variety of teaching and learning strategies, providing a rationale for each, and allow students a variety of ways to demonstrate evidence of mastery. Instructors often teach in the same way they were taught or in the way they learn best and assume that this approach works equally well for others. In likelihood, their approach will work well for some yet not others and will thereby privilege those for whom it does work. Using a variety of teaching and learning strategies, for example by combining authoritative sources as well as collaborative knowledge-building activities, will help international students feel like they are learning even when their epistemologies differ from that of the instructor (Kang & Chang, 2016; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019; Szilagyi, 2013). Using a variety of ways for students to demonstrate their mastery of a subject helps students who may be uncomfortable with one format—such as debate, questioning, or critical reasoning—be able to engage with the material in alternate ways (Liu et al., 2010; Okusolubo, 2018; Zhang, 2013). Providing a rationale for why they are choosing particular approaches and activities helps instructors become more thoughtful educators and can help students more clearly see the value in what they are being asked to do.
The above recommendations for selecting teaching, learning and assessment activities that promote equity and cultural inclusion could feel overwhelming to instructors. As experts in this study pointed out, designing learning experiences for courses with diverse learners takes time and—even if instructors have experience designing for and teaching international students—the time it takes to do so effectively and inclusively may still become a challenge if they have hectic schedules and heavy course loads. Therefore, the last competency in this category is useful, namely that instructors utilize equity rubrics that take a diverse set of students into account. A growing number of rubrics, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, are beginning to pay attention to issues of equity and inclusion in online courses. Although none of these, to date, bring together the specific elements necessary for culturally inclusive online learning that take into account the needs of international students, they can still be a helpful resource as instructors think through various aspects of their course designs.

**Utilizing Online Processes and Tools**

Online learning is different from face-to-face learning, which is a shift that some instructors are not prepared for (Lichoro, 2015). Teaching online requires that instructors possess a degree of technological sophistication that extends beyond basic proficiency with computers and the internet. It requires that instructors utilize instructional methods that not only teach the topic at hand but are also tailored to the online environment (Martin et al., 2019). In other words, the conventional approach to teaching in U.S. higher education that consists of lectures, reading, debate and written assignments does not necessarily transfer well to online learning. Experts in my study
acknowledged this tension and proposed five competencies to improve instructors’ utilization of online processes and tools. These included that instructors should (a) be familiar with key ways online pedagogy and teaching methods differ from face-to-face pedagogy and teaching; (b) be aware of types of practical and emotional support that students need in order to acclimate to an online course; (c) humanize the online environment using appropriate technological tools; (d) recognize the pros and cons of a range of technological tools and how their utility can vary depending on the context, users and way in which a tool is used; and (e) have familiarity with translation engines in order to understand the pros and cons students encounter when they use them.

The recommendation that instructors should know how online and face-to-face pedagogies differ sounds basic and yet is essential. A study by Martin et al. (2019) documented key differences between teaching an online course and teaching a face to face course in areas such as designing online learning activities and course orientations; organizing online instructional materials and assessment; responding and giving feedback online; sending announcements and email communication; scheduling time for course design and grading; and managing the learning management system and documents. Instructors need to be prepared for these differences and equipped to handle them. Students who are used to face-to-face learning may also need time and opportunity to adjust to differences in online learning. Experts in this study proposed that instructors be aware of types of support that international students need in order to acclimate to online learning and to help provide these. For example, students may need additional assistance or accelerated responsiveness to aid comprehension or help
clarify points of confusion that result from the absence of body language and direct feedback (Karkar-Esperat, 2018). Another example is that they may need facilitated opportunities to connect with their classmates in order to mitigate the feelings of isolation and reduced learning that stem from a lack of peer responsiveness online (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esperat, 2018).

Another competency related to using online processes and tools effectively is that instructors should humanize the online environment. Parker et al. (2021) describe humanized online spaces as ones where students feel connection and closeness with the instructor and with one another and where the outcome is increased interaction, learning, and academic success. Some examples that experts in this study suggested for how to humanize the online environment included using video for introductions or to show how to navigate the course environment as well as providing students with a dynamic, liquid syllabus (Pacansky-Brock, 2021). While a humanizing environment is critical at all stages of a course, paying particular attention to it in the early phase of structuring the online space helps set a caring tone and encourages instructors to view the presentation of materials from the student perspective. Humanizing the online environment can help instructors address a number of the challenges international students experience related to feelings of isolation and invisibility (Crosta et al., 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). It can also make instructors seem more welcoming and approachable, which might incline international students to seek them out when they need assistance (Zhang, 2013; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).
The two remaining competencies in this category specifically address the use of online tools, the first in a general and the second in a specific way. The recommendation that instructors should recognize the pros and cons of a range of technological tools asks them to appreciate that different online tools have different applications and to be thoughtful about which they decide to use and why. There are practical considerations, such as whether all students are equally able to access the tool. There are also pedagogical considerations, such as whether the tool fits the intended goals and objectives of the course. The competency that asks instructors to be familiar with translation engines is an example of instructors understanding the utility of a specific tool. Machine translation services are commonly used by international students who are non-native English speakers and can be immensely helpful, yet they also have limitations such as the additional time they require or inaccurate translations (Hill et al., 2022). By understanding the associated challenges, instructors can be more sensitive in recommending or responding to the use of a variety of online tools. The latter competency can be helpful in addressing some of the general challenges international students experience around language and communication. The former competency is important in mitigating some of the potential challenges related to navigating differences in access to technology and the internet that experts in this study proposed, and it also encourages online instructors to be more thoughtful in their practice.

**Being Self-aware and Reflexive About Design**

Reflexivity is a concept from qualitative research (Hunt, 2010) that is also relevant to the work of instruction, particularly when it involves teaching students from
diverse backgrounds (Greene & Park, 2021). Reflexivity takes the process of reflection—which is to analyze events or situations from a variety of angles in an attempt to determine what transpired and how one feels about it (Bolton, 2010)—a step deeper. Bolton (2010) describes reflexivity as “finding strategies to question our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices, and habitual actions, to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others” (p.13). Pedagogical reflexivity, then, is an instructor’s continuous process of self-examination in which they interrogate their “whys” and “hows” of teaching, their relationships with students, and their beliefs about themselves and others (Greene & Park, 2021). Reflexivity and self-awareness are necessary components to the pursuit of designing culturally inclusive online courses.

Two of the competencies that experts in this study proposed address this need, namely that instructors should (a) have cultural humility to acknowledge that their course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing; and (b) be willing to seek out and learn from critiques of your online course designs.

The first competency in this category relates to the fact that human epistemologies—that is, how we know what we know—are deeply ingrained in us and shaped by our cultures and contexts (Heaster-Ekholm, 2020). An instructor cannot help but be influenced by their own culture, beliefs and values in the content and methods they select for their courses. The fact that this type of bias is common, however, does not mean that it should go unchallenged. Instructors must be cognizant of the prominent role culture plays in human ideas and intentions and acknowledge potential blind spots with modesty and humility.
This is where the second competency related to self-awareness and reflexivity comes in. Instructors must seek out and learn from critiques of their online course designs. Critique from peers and students can offer instructors specific and tailored feedback on areas of strength in their course designs and those areas that need improvement. By putting this competency into practice, instructors can begin to identify and address their blind spots and improve on the inclusiveness of their course content and practices.

These two competencies correspond with a research-based practice recommendation that emerged from the limited scholarship on instructor challenges, namely that institutions should provide onboarding, professional development, and mentoring opportunities for instructors in areas such as cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural competence and intercultural communication (Heitner & Jennings, 2016; Kung, 2017; Liu et al., 2010). Offerings such as these can help instructors better understand how culture influences the learning approaches of different cultures (Kung, 2017); avoid biases and stereotypes (Morong & DesBiens, 2016); and learn to recognize their own assumptions and biases (Kung, 2017). Collectively, competencies in this category can help instructors become more culturally competent and inclusive in their course designs and begin to address issues around lack of representation and relevance, student feelings of isolation and invisibility and, to a degree, challenges associated with language, communication, and unfamiliar approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment.
Research Question 2: Facilitation Competencies

My second research question was: *What competencies (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) do experts believe that U.S. instructors need in order to facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students?* I defined *facilitation* as the process of leading students through learning content and activities. Facilitation involves activities commonly associated with the delivery of a course and generally follows the design phase. Tasks and responsibilities associated with facilitating an online course include: creating a sense of welcome, belonging and connection; conveying content; guiding learning activities; providing students feedback and assistance; and being self-aware and reflexive in one’s facilitation practice. To determine which competencies are important for culturally inclusive facilitation, I mapped the competency statements to these respective tasks and activities. This led me to categorize 24 of the 52 statements as competencies essential for the facilitation of culturally inclusive online courses. Table 6 lists the items I classified as facilitation competencies. As with the design competencies, the categories to which I assigned the facilitation competencies are not hard and fast. A particular knowledge, attitude, or skill/behavior may be relevant for a variety of tasks and activities; however, I opted to include it in the category where I felt it was most relevant.
### Table 7

**Competencies Essential for the Facilitation of Culturally Inclusive Online Courses**

#### Creating a Sense of Welcome, Belonging and Connection
- Believe that student diversity enriches the learning space *(attitude)*
- Facilitate opportunities for students to connect with you and each other to develop a sense of trust, community and belonging *(skill/behavior)*
- Accept that online courses need more effort than face-to-face classes to create social connections between students and between instructor and student *(attitude)*
- Recognize potential challenges associated with building trust among students from non-dominant cultures with students and instructors from dominant cultures *(knowledge)*
- Exhibit openness, curiosity and empathy, which are facets of intercultural competence *(attitude)*
- Have a friendly demeanor and an interest in getting to know students *(attitude)*
- Demonstrate intercultural competence (i.e. the ability to function effectively across cultures; to think and act appropriately; and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds) *(skill/behavior)*
- Pronounce students' names correctly *(skill/behavior)*
- Engage students about their culture and context without "putting them on the spot" or asking them to speak for the country, culture or people with whom they identify *(skill/behavior)*
- Address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions in class interactions early and often *(skill/behavior)*
- Be resilient and cheerful in the face of inevitable technical glitches *(attitude)*
- Have vulnerability to disclose when things online are complicated *(attitude)*

#### Conveying Content & Guiding Learning Activities
- Include multiple means of presenting content *(skill/behavior)*
- Emphasize key terms and ‘threshold concepts’ of this area of study for students *(skill/behavior)*
- Invite students to make sense of topics starting from their own perspective, rather than all starting from the same perspective/assumption *(skill/behavior)*
- Recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student’s second+ language can affect comprehension, expression and demonstration of learning *(knowledge)*
- Be patient with discussions that take more time as students navigate multiple languages *(attitude)*
- Be familiar with a variety of strategies for constructing multicultural groups for online course projects or activities *(knowledge)*

#### Providing Feedback and Assistance
- Create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching you for help or with questions *(skill/behavior)*
- Be willing to be available at times when students can access you, including across time zones *(attitude)*

#### Being Self-aware and Reflexive in Facilitating Online Courses
- Recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure *(knowledge)*
- Have cultural humility to acknowledge that your teaching approach is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing *(attitude)*
Be motivated to continually assess your teaching practices to ensure they are accommodating the needs of diverse students (attitude)
• Observe the virtual space acutely to pick up on what is not being said as a form of non-verbal communication (skill/behavior)

Creating a Sense of Welcome, Belonging and Connection

According to Vygotsky (1978), higher-level cognitive processing is made possible by the social interactions involved in learning. In order for online learning environments to be effective and for meaningful learning to take place, they must allow for positive social interactions (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2010). Research by Garrison et al. (2000) confirmed that student success in online learning programs hinges significantly on whether students experience a sense of community and connection. Specifically, students need to feel a sense of connection between themselves and their instructors, between themselves and their peers, and between the content being taught and their own lives. Therefore, an instructor's ability to facilitate a sense of welcome, belonging, and connection for students in online courses is vital to students' academic success. Ten of the competencies identified by experts in this study can help instructors facilitate positive social interactions and create welcoming and inclusive online environments for international students.

Three competencies address knowledge, attitudes and skills/behaviors that are necessary for creating connections for and among online learners, namely that instructors should (a) facilitate opportunities for students to connect with the instructor and each other to develop a sense of trust, community and belonging; (b) accept that online courses need more effort than face-to-face classes to create social connections between students and between instructor and student; and (c) recognize potential
challenges associated with building trust among students from non-dominant cultures with students and instructors from dominant cultures. The first of these reminds instructors that incorporating opportunities for students to connect with them and with their peers is important for an online course. It aligns with the research-based practice recommendations for instructors to create opportunities for students to connect with one another, especially at the outset of a course (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020; Kung, 2017; Sadykova, 2014) and to take the initiative to communicate and connect with international students (Nguyen, 2013; Zhang, 2013) rather than expecting students to take the initiative. Connection-building activities are often thought of as peripheral to learning (Kang & Chang, 2016), but the fact that both the experts in my study and the scholarly literature emphasize this theme highlights its importance. The other two competencies in this sub-category speak to specific challenges associated with establishing relationships online and across cultures, especially when there are power dynamics and potential prejudices at play. Due to the similarities in these three statements, I opted to distill these concepts into a single competency, namely that instructors should devote time for students to connect with you [the instructor] and each other to develop trust, community and belonging, paying attention to potential cultural and power dynamics. By devoting time to creating connections with and among students and by taking active steps to create a safe and welcoming online space, instructors can reduce some of the feelings of isolation and invisibility international students experience, such as their reticence in reaching out to others and failure to
connect meaningfully with peers (Crosta et al., 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Zhang, 2013; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).

Three of the competencies in this category relate to an instructor’s friendliness and intercultural competence and state that instructors should (a) demonstrate intercultural competence (i.e. the ability to function effectively across cultures; to think and act appropriately; and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds); (b) exhibit openness, curiosity and empathy, which are facets of intercultural competence; and (c) have a friendly demeanor and an interest in getting to know students. These recommendations remind instructors of the importance of recognizing the human and cultural aspects of online learning. To minimize redundancy among these three statements, I combined them into a single competency, namely that instructors should be friendly, open, curious and empathic in their interactions and demonstrate intercultural competence. Practicing this competency will help instructors to mitigate some of the challenges international students face related to feelings of isolation and invisibility, such as experiences of being misunderstood, microaggressions, and racism (Okusolubo, 2018) as well as their hesitancy to approach instructors for fear of causing offense (Kang & Chang, 2016). When instructors demonstrate intercultural competence, it can help put international students more at ease, which may encourage them to participate in discussions in spite of self-consciousness about their English-speaking capability as well as alleviate some of the difficulties they experience with language and communication.
Five competencies in this category address ways that an instructor can engage with culture to make the online space feel safe and welcoming for all. These include that instructors should (a) believe that student diversity enriches the learning space; (b) pronounce students' names correctly; (c) engage students about their culture and context without "putting them on the spot" or asking them to speak for the country, culture, or people with whom they identify; and (d) address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions in class interactions early and often. Findings from the literature show that while many instructors have positive perceptions of international students and internationalization (Haan et al., 2017; Jin & Schneider, 2019; Mahalingappa et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2013), others express more negative attitudes, such as feeling that the presence of international students in their classes increases their workload (Haan et al., 2014). In order to facilitate online courses in ways that are culturally inclusive, it is essential that instructors see the presence of diversity not as a deficit but as something that enriches the learning space. Second, as simple as it sounds, making the attempt to pronounce students' names correctly contributes significantly to students’ sense of belonging and demonstrates attention and care on the part of an instructor. Engaging students about their cultures also shows attention and interest on the part of instructors, and can be a valuable way of helping students connect course content to their lived experiences. However, instructors must be careful not to stereotype students in the process or to assume that students necessarily want to share their viewpoints or experiences openly with others. This third competency is similar to one found in the research-based practice recommendations,
which suggests that instructors invite international students to share how course topics relate to their culture or context, yet use caution in doing so as not to make student feel uncomfortable or as though they are on display (Kung, 2017; Saunders and Karida, 2011; Yeh et al., 2021). A fourth way to create a sense of safety and belonging in the virtual classroom is to address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions that come up. Sometimes instructors do not pick up on these, or they may not feel equipped to address them and therefore let them slide. The result is that targeted students feel unwelcome, alienated, and even violated. Instructors must become better at recognizing and interrupting these events when they happen, in order to make the online space feel safe for all students. By putting these five competencies into practice, instructors can mitigate some of the negative experiences international students have with microaggressions and racism (Okusolubo, 2018). Doing so can also help instructors to address some of the marginalization and invisibility students experience due to lack of representation and relevance of course content and material.

The two final recommendations in this category can help instructors create a more safe space by being transparent and resilient in the face of facilitation challenges. These competencies include that instructors should (a) have vulnerability to disclose when things online are complicated; and (b) be resilient and cheerful in the face of inevitable technical glitches. Due to the overlap in these two ideas, I combined them into one, which is that instructors should be good natured, resilient and transparent when faced with technical difficulties or complicated situations online. There are many ways that the online environment can become fraught or complicated, such as when
people misunderstand or attack each other (Clark et al., 2012; Karkar-Esperat, 2018) or when there are technical glitches. The ways an instructor responds to these issues can either exacerbate or ease the tensions that result. In choosing to remain good natured and in persisting through the challenges, instructors communicate their presence and acceptance to students. In this way, instructors can mitigate some of the challenges international students have encountered online due to inadequate structure, guidance and responsiveness on the part of instructors (Kang & Chang, 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Smith 2021; Zhang, 2013). This competency also speaks to some of the problems experts proposed while brainstorming international student challenges in online learning, such as connectivity challenges due to unstable wifi or electricity or limited access to broadband internet. Although these competencies do not resolve those challenges, they guide instructors in how they can respond to situations that are outside of their control in ways that are reassuring and compassionate.

**Conveying Content & Guiding Learning Activities**

Conveying content and guiding learning activities are arguably the most quintessential responsibilities of facilitation and the ones people think of most readily when asked to describe the role of an instructor. Conveying content includes activities like lecturing, showing slides, and giving demonstrations. Guiding learning activities refers to facilitating interactive elements such as course discussions, assignments, and group work, and offering the necessary direction to help students understand what is expected of them as well as to guide them towards deeper comprehension of course content. Six of the competencies that experts in this study recommended speak to what
instructors need to know and be able to do in order to engage in these facilitation activities in ways that are effective for international students. These competencies are to (a) include multiple means of presenting content; (b) emphasize key terms and ‘threshold concepts’ of this area of study for students; (c) invite students to make sense of topics starting from their own perspective, rather than all starting from the same perspective/assumption; (d) recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student’s second+ language can affect comprehension, expression and demonstration of learning; (e) be patient with discussions that take more time as students navigate multiple languages; and (f) be familiar with a variety of strategies for structuring and guiding multicultural groups for online course projects or activities.

The first two competencies in this category offer instructors guidance on how to be more effective in presenting course content to international audiences. The recommendation to present content in multiple ways means that instead of just conveying content with lecture or readings, as is common in higher education settings, instructors should also incorporate a variety of media and tools such as videos, podcasts, demonstrations, and interactive simulations. This competency mirrors the UDL advice to use multiple means of representation (Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014) and reminds instructors of the importance of sharing the same or similar materials in a variety of ways in order to meet the needs and preferences of diverse learners. In doing so, it encompasses and expands the existing research-based practice recommendation to use audio and visual aids and diverse activities (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2010).
The second competency, which is about emphasizing key terms and concepts, is another one that will assist instructors in effectively conveying content. This one is especially helpful for non-native English speakers or students who do not possess the anticipated educational background or prerequisite knowledge, because it scaffolds critical information in a way that allows students to mentally organize and process it. This competency is related to one of the research-based practice recommendations, which is that instructors should explain acronyms (Mahalingappa et al., 2021). Acronyms are often a form of discipline-specific jargon. By explaining these in the moment, rather than relying on students to already know them or look them up, instructors can help students keep pace with the information being conveyed. I combined the expert-proposed competency and research-based practice recommendation into a single statement, namely that instructors should *identify key terms, acronyms and ‘threshold concepts’ of this area of study for students*. When instructors present content in multiple ways, emphasizing key concepts and explaining acronyms and terms, it helps to address some of the challenges international students encounter related to language and communication. Specifically, it can help students better understand the content (Liu et al., 2010; Okusolubo, 2018) as well as potentially reduce the amount of time they spend on assignments (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Liu et al., 2010; Szilagyi, 2013; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). It may also help them navigate unfamiliar approaches to teaching and learning (Kang & Chang, 2016; Liu et al., 2010; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019), by allowing them to engage with material in both new and familiar ways.
A facilitation competency that is relevant both to conveying content as well as guiding learning activities is to invite students to make sense of topics starting from their own perspective, rather than all starting from the same perspective/assumption. This encourages international students to reflect on how course material relates to their own lives and experiences and makes the content more relevant for them. It also increases the likelihood of a diversity of perspectives being raised in class discussions, exposing other students to new ways of thinking. In inviting students to make sense of a topic from their own perspective, instructors can mitigate some of the challenges international students experience due to a lack of representation and relevance of course content that makes it hard to relate the material to their lives (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017). In addition, when international students are willing to share their perspectives with the class, it can increase the understanding and appreciation for multicultural perspectives on the part of the instructor and their peers (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017) making for a richer learning experience for everyone.

Two competencies specifically address how instructors can engage effectively across language differences and related difficulties. The expert proposed suggestion to recognize the challenges involved in students learning and working in their non-native language relates to concerns identified in the literature, such as international students spending two-to-three times more time on reading and writing assignments than their native speaking peers (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Liu et al., 2010; Szilagyi, 2013; Zhang & Kenny, 2010) or frustrations at their inability to understand others or be understood due to accents, colloquialisms, etc. (Liu et al., 2010; Okusolubo, 2018). When international
students engage in learning or conversation in a non-native tongue, they often need to mentally translate what is being said into their native language, process the idea, reflect on it, and then mentally translate their response back into English. This takes time and it can prove frustrating to the student if the discussion around them is fast-paced and moves on before they are able to respond. A culturally inclusive instructor will recognize the impact this can have on student comprehension and participation. A culturally inclusive instructor will also adapt their own practice, such as by being patient in facilitating synchronous discussions (oral or written), in order to account for and accommodate the needs of non-native English speakers.

Another competency that is important for instructors to effectively guide learning activities for international students is knowing a variety of ways to construct multicultural groups. Small groups as a way to encourage discussion, strengthen student connections, and construct knowledge was among the research-based practice recommendations (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esparat, 2018; Kung, 2017; Mahalingappa et al., 2021; Sadykova, 2014; Zhang, 2013). However, the emphasis that experts in this study placed on knowing and using strategies for constructing groups implies that the process of constructing multicultural teams may not be a straightforward one. Reasons for this could include some of the challenges expert panelists brainstormed, such as international students encountering prejudice or discrimination from native students who do not want to be paired with them on assignments or a lack of immediate or shared understanding among cross-cultural teammates about dividing up tasks in a group project. Experts agreed that instructors
should know how to structure and equip multicultural groups in ways that set them up for success. A research-based competency that aligns with this is to give students guidance in how to structure group work, including how to assign group member roles (Morong & DesBiens, 2016; Sadykova, 2014). I decided to integrate this with the expert-proposed competency, resulting in the statement that instructors should be familiar with a variety of strategies for structuring and guiding multicultural groups for online course projects or activities. Doing so will help instructors to respond to some of the criticisms they experience related to not providing international students with adequate structure and guidance in online courses (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esperat, 2018) and help reduce potential friction between international students and their peers in group assignments (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esperat, 2018).

Providing Feedback and Assistance

Timely and substantive instructor feedback plays an important role in successful online learning (Jensen et al., 2021). Yet as my review of the literature on international student challenges in online learning revealed, students voiced repeated frustration at a lack of instructor feedback and responsiveness in their online courses, which left them confused and unable to gauge their progress (Kang & Chang, 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Smith 2021; Zhang, 2013). Interestingly, the topic of feedback did not come up in the competencies that experts in this study felt were most important for inclusive online learning. However, given the attention the subject received in the scholarly literature, I felt that it was important to have a competency devoted to it. Therefore, I added the research-based practice recommendation to provide frequent and timely feedback on
assignments and discussion board posts to the final competencies list. Providing feedback is a good practice for all online facilitation, but it is especially helpful for international students who may be struggling with language and comprehension difficulties in online settings.

Two competencies that experts in this study suggested, and that align with this category of providing feedback and assistance, are for instructors to (a) create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching them for help or with questions; and (b) to be willing to be available at times when students can access them, including across time zones. Since there is overlap between these, I distilled them into a single competency, namely for instructors to create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching them with questions and a variety of means and times for them to do so. This competency corresponds with the research-based practice recommendation that instructors should be available for student questions at a variety of times and places (Mahalingappa et al., 2021). By being intentional to create an environment in which they are accessible and approachable, such as setting up private office hours for which students can sign up, instructors may be able to ease some of the reluctance international students experience in reaching out to them for assistance (Zhang, 2013; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). By being available to answer student questions when they arise, instructors can provide valuable clarity and guidance to students (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Karkar-Esperat, 2018).
Being Self-aware and Reflexive in Facilitating Online Courses

The final four competencies that pertain to facilitating culturally inclusive online courses are ones that align with tasks and activities for being self-aware and reflexive. These competencies include that instructors should (a) recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure; (b) have cultural humility to acknowledge that their teaching approach is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing; (c) continually assess their teaching practices to ensure they are accommodating the needs of diverse students; and (d) observe the virtual space acutely to pick up on what is not being said as a form of non-verbal communication. Collectively, these competencies align with the research-based practice recommendation that encourages instructors to pursue further training in order to increase their own cultural awareness and cultural competence (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a; Kung, 2017; Liu et al., 2010; Morong & DesBiens, 2016; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).

In many ways, the competency of recognizing that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning sums up this entire study. It underscores the influential role culture plays in everything humans do and particularly in our expectations and practices around teaching and learning. However, I included it within this discussion of facilitation competencies because it specifically addresses how culture shapes behaviors related to communication, relationships, participation style, working with others, self-
awareness, and willingness to self-disclose. These are all aspects of human interaction that come into play in facilitating an online course.

Two other competencies that are involved in instructors being self-aware and reflexive are that they (a) have cultural humility to acknowledge that their teaching approach is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing; and (b) continually assess their teaching practices to ensure they are accommodating the needs of diverse students. As the earlier portions of this study have shown, human ideas and behaviors around education and knowledge are deeply rooted in cultural values and norms. Yet, surprisingly, instructors are often ignorant of the role culture plays in how and what they teach. Acknowledging this relationship is a foundational step in instructors becoming more culturally inclusive in how they facilitate online courses, along with the need to assess and adapt their teaching practices to accommodate the needs of diverse students. Doing so ensures that instructors are not only aware of the effects culture has on teaching and learning but are actively seeking ways to make their teaching practices more inclusive. By putting these two competencies into practice, instructors can begin to engage more effectively around some of the challenges international students experience related to unfamiliar approaches to teaching, learning and assessment (Kang & Chang, 2016; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019; Szilagyi, 2013) and the different expectations students may have of them as instructors (Kang & Chang, 2016; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019).

The fourth and final competency in the facilitation category is for instructors to observe the virtual space acutely to pick up on what is not being said as a form of non-
verbal communication. Although this competency could have fit in several of the other categories, I chose to include it in this one because—in addition to skills in observation and discernment—it requires cultural humility on the part of the instructor in order to be implemented effectively. Without cultural humility, an instructor will likely use their own expectations as a lens to interpret their observations. However, a self-aware and reflexive instructor will engage critically with their own assumptions and seek out different points of view. This practice may help instructors to address some of the challenges international students encounter in online learning around a failure to connect meaningfully with other students, the lack of appreciation for multicultural perspectives, and experiences of marginalization and invisibility (Crosta et al., 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).

**Foundational Competencies for Design and Facilitation**

My purpose in dividing the list of expert-proposed competencies into those related to design and those related to facilitation was both to answer my original research questions as well as to make the resulting list of knowledge, attitudes and skills more immediately usable for instructors. In several cases where a competency may have corresponded with both design and facilitation tasks and activities, I opted to include it in the category where I felt it was most relevant. However, there were three competencies that seemed equally essential to both design and facilitation. These included the recommendations that instructors (a) interrogate their pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others; (b) avoid language and concepts that might
marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups; and (c) have humility to recognize that they do not have all the answers. I decided to create a new category for them titled foundational competencies for design and facilitation, which can be seen in Table 7.

Table 8

*Competencies Essential for the Design & Facilitation of Culturally Inclusive Online Courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills/Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups <em>(skill/behavior)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Have humility to recognize that you do not have all the answers <em>(attitude)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Interrogate your pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others <em>(skill/behavior)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cultural inclusion means deliberate and sustained engagement with cultural diversity and an appreciation for how this diversity influences the teaching practices, content, curriculum, and social interactions that make up an educational experience. Cultural inclusion builds on and amplifies equitable practices in teaching and learning. It is imperative, therefore, that instructors *interrogate the pedagogical approaches they are using* to design and facilitate online courses and to identify ways in which their decisions may inadvertently benefit some students over others. In doing so, they also must *strive to uncover and eradicate areas of exclusion, bias, racism and xenophobia* in their course designs and teaching. An instructor's choice of words are one way that prejudice and discrimination can manifest themselves. Consequently, instructors should be careful to *avoid language and concepts that can marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups*. This competency aligns with the research-based practice recommendation that instructors avoid stereotyping (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a; Kung, 2017; Morong &
DesBiens, 2016). Since what is considered acceptable or appropriate language is continuously shifting, it is important for instructors to be open to feedback and change. This is where the final competency fits in: whether it is in interrogating their teaching practices, design choices, language, or any other aspect of their approach to teaching and learning, it is important that instructors possess humility. This final competency can be liberating; it means that instructors do not need to have all of the answers but can continue to change and grow with the feedback and input they receive from others.

These three competencies are essential in tackling some of the more pernicious challenges international students encounter in online courses, such as microaggressions, racism, and experiences of marginalization and invisibility (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017; Okusolubo, 2018). The competencies can also help instructors begin to uncover and more fully appreciate the problems related to the limited cultural diversity within their curriculum, as well as how the use of unfamiliar approaches to teaching, assessment and knowledge acquisition can place greater cognitive demands on international students (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2017; Liu et al. 2010; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019).

**Research Question 3: Most Essential Competencies**

My third research question asked experts to evaluate what instructor competencies are most essential to improving international students’ online learning experience. Using a Q-sort to gauge most and less essential competencies had some limitations. One limitation is that the ranking scores are not commensurate across the three categories (i.e. knowledge, attitudes, and skills). This is because each category had a different number of competencies in it for experts to rank. Therefore, the score values
of items in one category cannot be compared to the score values of those in another.

Another potential shortcoming is that different panelists used different criteria for their rankings. One participant, for example, shared that they assigned lower rankings to items that they felt were covered by other, higher ranked items, whereas another shared that they chose to rank items that served a greater number of students higher than those that served only a few. Lastly, some participants shared that they struggled with the ranking activity because of the similarities and repetitiveness among a number of the competencies on the lists. Several also found it challenging to distinguish between items that they felt were all equally important.

Although there were some limitations to the round three ranking activity, the findings are nevertheless useful in determining which competencies experts agreed were the most essential. Table 8 shows the top five responses for each category. A complete list of the results of the ranking exercise can be found in Appendix K, Q-Sort Rankings.

**Table 9**

*Top 5 Most Essential Knowledge, Attitude and Skills/Behaviors Competencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Competency Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure. <em>(facilitation)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that promote access and inclusion. <em>(design)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Recognize cultural assumptions and biases that underlie the course discipline and topics. <em>(design)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) 76</td>
<td>Have knowledge of students' unique backgrounds and contexts and how these may influence their learning online (e.g. educational; economic; cultural; social; technological; disability; etc.). <em>(design)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) 73</td>
<td>Recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student's second+language can affect comprehension, expression and demonstration of learning. <em>(facilitation)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attitudes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) 75</td>
<td>Have cultural humility to acknowledge that their course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing. <em>(design)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) 74</td>
<td>Have cultural humility to acknowledge that their teaching methodology is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing. <em>(facilitation)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) 73</td>
<td>Believe that student diversity enriches the learning space. <em>(facilitation)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) 70</td>
<td>Exhibit openness, curiosity and empathy, which are facets of intercultural competence. <em>(facilitation)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) 65</td>
<td>Be motivated to continually assess their teaching practices to ensure they are accommodating the needs of diverse students. <em>(facilitation)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Skills/Behaviors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) 92 (tied)</td>
<td>Avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups. <em>(both)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) 92 (tied)</td>
<td>Demonstrate intercultural competence (i.e. the ability to function effectively across cultures; to think and act appropriately; and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds). <em>(facilitation)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) 90</td>
<td>Interrogate their pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others. <em>(both)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) 85</td>
<td>Address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions in class interactions early and often. <em>(facilitation)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) 84</td>
<td>Integrate culturally relevant resources into course content. <em>(design)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the knowledge category, it is interesting to note that the top-ranked competency—*recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure*—has a significantly higher score than the second-ranked item on the list (95 and 80,
respectively). This indicates a high level of priority for this competency and a strong agreement among respondents. The four remaining top scoring competencies include ones that encourage instructors to use anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies, recognize the cultural assumptions and biases shaping the course discipline, understand students’ unique context and backgrounds, and to recognize the impact of students’ working in a language different from their native tongue.

Within the attitude category, there is only one point difference separating each of the top three competencies. This suggests that there was not a strong agreement among respondents as to what the most essential attitude was, but rather that at least three of them are relatively equally important. The three attitudes ranked as most essential included that instructors should have cultural humility to acknowledge that their course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing; have cultural humility to acknowledge that their teaching methodology is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing; and believe that student diversity enriches the learning space. The fact that top scores were given to the two competencies addressing cultural humility indicates that it is an very important trait for instructors to possess in their quest for cultural inclusion. The remaining two top-ranked competencies included ones that encourage instructors to exhibit openness, curiosity and empathy (facets of intercultural competence) and to frequently assess their own practice to make sure they are meeting the needs of diverse students.

Within the skills/behaviors category, two items tied for the top-ranked position with only a two-point difference between these and a third item. As with the attitude
category, these scores indicate that there was not strong agreement among respondents as to one most essential skill/behavior. Instead, there was clear agreement as to the criticality of two of them and strong support for the importance of a third. The two highest ranked competencies were that instructors should 

*intercultural competence* and *avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups*. The fact that the two competencies that address intercultural competence appear in the top five of their respective lists (one in this category and one in the attitudes category) indicates the high value experts place on this characteristic in the quest for cultural inclusion. It also highlights the problem of repetitiveness among competencies in the various categories that proved challenging in this study. The third-highly ranked skill/behavior competency was that instructors should 

*interrogate their pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others*. The remaining two top-ranked competencies addressed the need for instructors to challenge assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings that come up in class and to include culturally relevant resources.

In reflecting on these findings, two observations stand out. The first is that these top 15 competencies are fairly evenly distributed among the design and facilitation categories. Five of the items are design competencies, 7 are facilitation competencies, and 2 are relevant to both design and facilitation. This distribution reinforces the idea that attention to cultural inclusion in both phases is equally important. My second observation is that these top 15 competencies all address culture in some specific way—
be it aspects related to the strengths of cultural diversity or aspects related to the
injuries of cultural bias and exclusion. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that in the
prompt I asked panelists to consider which competencies they thought would be
particularly impactful for international students versus those more generally important
for online teaching. However, I think the top 15 are still notable in this way, particularly
in light of existing guidance—such as that found in the research-based practice
recommendations—that does not do much to address the cultural nature of the
challenges international students face.

Summary of My Findings to the Research Questions

In my exploration of what competencies U.S. instructors need in order to design
and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students, I
asked three questions of my expert panelists. These questions included what
competencies they considered important for design, what competencies they
considered important for facilitation, and which of these competencies they considered
most essential. Since the distinction between design and facilitation competencies
proved problematic for some of the panelists, I removed it for the final two rounds of
data collection. However, I reintroduced the domains in my interpretation and
discussion of the findings. The resulting lists included 25 design competencies, 24
facilitation competencies, and three that applied equally well to both.

Sorting the items into design and facilitation domains exposed areas of similarity
and overlap among a number of the competencies. In order to reduce redundancies, I
combined several similar items with each other, which reduced the overall number of
competencies from 52 to 41. I also made some minor edits to word choices in order to make some of the remaining competencies clearer.

As part of my discussion, I looked at how the expert-proposed competencies compared to existing research-based practice recommendations. I found considerable alignment between the items intended to help instructors ensure relevance and inclusion of their content and materials, mitigate feelings of isolation and invisibility among international students, and ease students into unfamiliar approaches to teaching and learning. The expert-proposed competencies built on and exceeded the research-based practice recommendations in most of these areas. However, there was less alignment in the items suggested to address language and communication difficulties and those intended to help instructors provide clear and adequate structures for their online courses. These areas were not addressed as thoroughly in the expert-proposed competencies as in the research-based practice recommendations. This initially surprised me, as I had anticipated that the instructional designers among my expert panelists would speak to some of these concerns. Upon further reflection, though, I think it is conceivable that—since the purpose of this study was to identify competencies that promote cultural inclusion—items concerning content, interactions, and pedagogy rose to the surface while those focused on structure may have seemed too obvious to mention (e.g. Karkar-Esperat’s (2018) recommendation to articulate course goals and topics). In regards to language- and communication-related competencies, those in research-based practice recommendations primarily addressed issues arising in synchronous class sessions (e.g. Mahalingappa et al.’s (2021) suggestion
to have students write their responses and read them out loud or to provide take-home exams to allow students more time to complete them). It is possible that many of the experts in this study were responding to my prompts with asynchronous learning in mind, which would negate the need for many of the suggested research-based practice recommendations.

In addition to comparing the expert-proposed competencies to the research-based practice recommendations, I also mapped the competencies to the international student challenges described in the scholarly literature. In doing so, I was able to determine that the expert-proposed competencies addressed every student challenge identified with the exception of one, namely the lack of instructor feedback that led to student confusion and an inability to gauge their progress in a course. Since the challenge was named in a number of studies (Kang & Chang, 2016; Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Smith 2021; Zhang, 2013) and since there was an existing research-based practice recommendation to address it, I opted to add the competency that instructors should: *provide frequent and timely feedback on assignments and discussion board posts to the final competencies list*. This increased the overall number of competencies from 41 to 42.

To answer my third research question about which of the competencies experts considered to be most essential, I used the scores generated by the Q-sorts during round three of my Delphi study. I selected the five items from each of the knowledge, attitude and skills/behaviors lists that received the highest tallies. Although all of the 52 competencies had been deemed as very or extremely helpful by the experts, there was
general agreement that these 15 were the *most essential* competencies instructors need in order to design and facilitate culturally inclusive online courses for international students. Due to the fact that I merged two of the competencies that were among the top 15 (since they both related to intercultural competence) the final list of most essential competencies contains 14 items. Table 9 displays the list of revised competencies that emerged from answering research questions one and two, and highlights the most essential competencies that emerged from answering research question three.

Table 10
Revised List of Design and Facilitation Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIGN COMPETENCIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selecting Content and Materials</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Recognize cultural assumptions and biases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that underlie the course discipline and</td>
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<td>topics.*</td>
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<td>● Exhibit a growth mindset to seek out new</td>
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<td>types of content for your course.</td>
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<td>● Include a variety of perspectives and</td>
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<td>culturally relevant resources into the</td>
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<td>course content, paying attention to</td>
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<td>global/non-Western views.*</td>
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<td>● Include media that are representative of</td>
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<td>different cultures, races and ethnicities.</td>
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<td><strong>Considering Learner Backgrounds and Needs</strong></td>
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<td>● Have knowledge of students' unique</td>
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<td>contexts and backgrounds and how these</td>
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<td>may influence their learning online.*</td>
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<td>● Exhibit compassion for students who are</td>
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<td>unfamiliar with U.S. class format by</td>
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<td>adapting the course design to their needs.</td>
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<td>● Articulate the prerequisite knowledge and</td>
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<td>skills that are needed for the course</td>
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<td>and recommendations for what students</td>
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<td>can do if they lack some of these.</td>
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<td>● Caption videos or make use of captioning</td>
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<td>best use of general academic and non-</td>
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<td>academic student support services.</td>
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<td><strong>Choosing Teaching, Learning and Assessment Activities</strong></td>
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| ● Be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that 
  promote access and inclusion.*            |
| ● Be familiar with a variety of approaches to assessment that are equitable and accessible. |
| ● Use a variety of teaching and learning strategies, providing a rationale for each, and allow students a variety of ways to demonstrate evidence of mastery. |
| ● Utilize equity rubrics that take a diverse set of students into account. |
**Utilizing Online Processes and Tools**
- Be familiar with key ways online pedagogy and teaching methods differ from face-to-face pedagogy and teaching.
- Be aware of types of practical and emotional support that students need in order to acclimate to an online course.
- Humanize the online environment using appropriate technological tools.
- Recognize the pros and cons of a range of technological tools and how their utility can vary depending on the context, users and way in which a tool is used.
- Have familiarity with translation engines in order to understand the pros and cons students encounter when they use them.

**Being Self-aware and Reflexive About Design**
- Have cultural humility to acknowledge that your course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.*
- Seek out and learn from critiques of your online course designs.

**FACILITATION COMPETENCIES**

**Creating a Sense of Welcome, Belonging and Connection**
- Devote time for students to connect with you and each other to develop trust, community and belonging, paying attention to potential cultural and power dynamics.
- Be friendly, open, curious and empathic in your interactions and demonstrate intercultural competence.*
- Believe that student diversity enriches the learning space.*
- Pronounce students’ names correctly.
- Engage students about their culture and context without “putting them on the spot” or asking them to speak for the country, culture or people with whom they identify.
- Address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions in class interactions early and often.*
- Be good natured, resilient and transparent when faced with technical difficulties or complicated situations online.

**Conveying Content & Guiding Learning Activities**
- Include multiple means of presenting content.
- Identify key terms, acronyms and ‘threshold concepts’ of this area of study for students.
- Invite students to make sense of topics starting from their own perspective, rather than all starting from the same perspective/assumption.
- Recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student’s second+ language can affect comprehension, expression and demonstration of learning.*
- Be patient with discussions that take more time as students navigate multiple languages.
- Be familiar with a variety of strategies for structuring and guiding multicultural groups for online course projects or activities.

**Providing Feedback and Assistance**
- Provide frequent and timely feedback on assignments and discussion board posts. *(Research-based practice recommendation)*
- Create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching you with questions and a variety of means and times for them to do so.

**Being Self-aware and Reflexive in Facilitating Online Courses**
- Recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as
well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure.*

- Have cultural humility to acknowledge that your teaching approach is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.*
- Be motivated to continually assess your teaching practices to ensure you are accommodating the needs of diverse students.*
- Observe the virtual space acutely to pick up on what is not being said as a form of non-verbal communication.

FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR BOTH DESIGN AND FACILITATION

- Interrogate your pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others.*
- Avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups.*
- Have humility to recognize that you do not have all the answers.

Note. Statements that are bold and marked with an asterisk (*) were among the 15 competencies that experts ranked as most essential.

Conclusions and Limitations

The purpose of this research study was to identify competencies that higher education instructors at U.S. institutions need in order to create online courses that are culturally inclusive and support the success of international students. In reviewing and summarizing the existing literature on international student challenges in online courses and the research-based practice recommendations, I discovered that many of the challenges have their roots in cultural difference rather than shortcomings on the part of the student or instructor. Therefore, these challenges need to be addressed with greater cultural understanding and inclusion. There are currently no formalized frameworks or best practices, however, to guide instructors in designing and facilitating online courses in ways that are culturally inclusive and meet the needs of international students. This study, composed of experts in different realms, highlighted the specific competencies that would help instructors be more culturally inclusive. Using a Delphi approach, I was able to gather, synthesize, refine and build upon expert opinion to
create a list of 42 requisite instructor competencies along with a designation of 14 of these as the most essential competencies.

**Revised Conceptual Framework**

In exploring what instructors need to know and be able to do in order to account for the cultural nature of teaching, learning, and interactions, this study addressed an existing knowledge gap. By focusing on how instructors can be more culturally inclusive in their approaches to online learning, and by operationalizing these recommendations as competencies, this study makes a unique contribution to existing scholarship and practice. Figure 3 presents my revised conceptual framework. It shows how the addition of the expert-proposed competencies from this Delphi study led to an emphasis on the need for instructors to value diversity, exhibit cultural understanding and humility, and utilize equitable and inclusive teaching practices.
Figure 4
Revised Conceptual Framework

**Int'l Student Challenges in Online Courses**
- Difficulties with language & communication
- Inadequate structure, guidance & responsiveness
- Unfamiliar approaches to teaching, learning & assessment
- Confusion about academic integrity & plagiarism
- Feelings of isolation & invisibility
- Lack of representation & relevance

**Competencies to Promote Cultural Inclusion in Online Courses**

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**Research-Based Practice Recommendations**
(Literature review)
- Address language and communication difficulties
- Provide adequate structure, guidance and responsiveness
- Be proactive and responsive
- Ease students into unfamiliar approaches to teaching, learning and assessment
- Mitigate feelings of isolation and invisibility
- Ensure relevance and representation of content

**Expert-Proposed Requisite Knowledge, Attitudes & Skills**
(Delphi study)
- Select content & materials that are culturally relevant and reflect a variety of perspectives
- Consider the unique backgrounds & needs of learners
- Be thoughtful in selecting teaching, learning & assessment and interrogate approaches for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others.
- Utilize online processes and tools effectively
- Create a sense of welcome, belonging & connection
- Work with (not against) culture in convey content and guiding learning activities
- Provide frequent & timely feedback and be accessible to students for assistance
- Avoid language & concepts that marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups
- Have cultural humility
- Be self-aware and reflexive in design & facilitation practices

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**Most Essential Instructor Competencies**
**Design**
- Recognize cultural assumptions and biases that underlie the course discipline and topics.
- Include a variety of perspectives and culturally relevant resources into the course content, paying attention to global/non-Western views.
- Have knowledge of students' unique contexts and backgrounds and how these may influence their learning online.
- Be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that promote access and inclusion.
- Have cultural humility to acknowledge that your course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.

**Facilitation**
- Be friendly, open, curious and empathic in your interactions and demonstrate intercultural competence.
- Believe that student diversity enriches the learning space.
- Address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions in class interactions early and often.
- Recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student's second+ language can affect comprehension, expression and demonstration of learning.
- Recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure.
- Have cultural humility to acknowledge that your teaching approach is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.
- Be motivated to continually assess your teaching practices to ensure you are accommodating the needs of diverse students.

Both
- Interrogate your pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others.
- Avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups.
Limitations

There are several limitations to the findings of this research study. One limitation is in my use of a purposive sample. Since I utilized the Delphi method to collect my data, I needed participants with expertise in relevant topics who could pool their collective understanding to produce meaningful insights into complex problems (Linstone & Turoff, 2011). The panelists who contributed to my study had a high degree of expertise in areas including international education, international student services, culturally responsive pedagogy, intercultural competence, instructional design, and online learning. They provided invaluable input, yet it cannot be assumed that their insight and opinions represent the viewpoints of all experts in these areas. Therefore, the results of this study may have differed if alternate panelists had been involved.

A second limitation is that the findings of this study are based on expert insight rather than direct empirical research. In other words, I solicited the input of experts who drew on their own experience, research, and impressions to identify the competencies they felt were necessary for instructors to possess. As such, the results rely on the opinions and expertise of others, rather than on direct observation or experimentation.

A third limitation is that I, as the researcher, played an integral role in analyzing and distilling the data, in crafting the competency statements, and in refining the final competencies list. Therefore, my fingerprints are all over the results and findings, so to speak. Research is never a value-free undertaking (Greenbank, 2003), but it is important to reduce researcher bias as much as possible. Therefore, I attempted to identify and mitigate personal bias by articulating my positionality at the outset of this study and
being cognizant of its potential effect throughout (Holmes, 2020). Nevertheless, I believe that—had a different researcher been conducting this study—the final competencies may likely have varied.

A fourth limitation is that this research focused exclusively on the role and responsibilities of the instructor. However, the experiences and role of international students in online courses are an equally valid area of focus. The roles and experiences of native students/peers in promoting cultural inclusion and the roles of the institution would also have been interesting topics to explore. However, as with any research study, it was necessary for me to limit the scope of this project in order to be able to complete it.

A fifth limitation in this study was due to the unforeseeable difficulties caused by my use of the domains of design and facilitation as well as the categories of knowledge, attitudes and skills to guide experts’ responses. In response to feedback from several panelists at the end of round one, about their difficulty in distinguishing between the tasks and responsibilities of design versus facilitation, I opted to eliminate the distinction between those domains for the remaining two rounds of data collection. However, I ended up reviving them during my final analysis in order to answer my original research questions. During this final analysis, I also realized the extent to which asking panelists to consider knowledge, attitudes and skills as separate categories had created repetition and redundancy in the original list of competencies. Although panelists had commented about being confused about these categories as well, it did not occur to me to eliminate them during the study, as I had done with the design and
facilitation domains. The fact that I maintained these categories until the final analysis, at which point I eliminated them, may have muddied the process for panelists. This may have made it more challenging for experts to complete the final ranking task, due to the repetitive nature of several competencies.

A sixth limitation of this study is that, though the purpose of my research was to identify a list of competencies, the resulting statements are not competencies in the strict sense. Competency statements are intended to be clear and succinct and adhere to a specific structure. They generally begin with a present tense action verb, include an object, and do not include evaluative or relative adjectives or adverbs such as effective, quickly, etc. (University of Texas School of Public Health, 2012). Although I attempted to write the recommendations experts made as competencies, several of the resulting statements are more nuanced or elaborate than I would have liked. As such, I consider them a first pass at a list of instructor competencies to promote cultural inclusion, with room for improvement and refinement based on subsequent research.

Implications

The findings from this study support those in the existing literature that international students experience a variety of challenges in U.S. online courses and that instructors have an important part to play in mitigating those challenges. Findings from this study also expand on our existing knowledge. This research makes a unique contribution to the fields of online learning and international education by presenting a way of looking at the challenges students experience through the lens of cultural differences and addressing the challenges through cultural inclusion.
One finding of particular note that emerged from this study is the importance of instructors possessing cultural understanding and cultural humility. Current scholarship that addresses teaching international students highlights the importance of intercultural competence and intercultural communication (Morong & DesBien, 2016; Sadykova, 2012; Yeh et al., 2021). Yet it is not enough for instructors to be merely interculturally competent. Instructors also need to recognize and acknowledge that cultural assumptions and biases shape their approaches to teaching, learning and course content. This requires that they make deliberate and continuous efforts to incorporate a variety of perspectives and culturally relevant resources into the course content, paying particular attention to global/non-Western views. Instructors also need to regularly interrogate their pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the cultural knowledge and behaviors of some students over others.

By incorporating the competencies that emerged from this study, instructors can make strides in promoting cultural inclusion in their online courses in ways that support the success of international students. This competencies list serves as a framework for understanding practices that promote cultural inclusion in the online classroom. However, it is only a starting point. These ideas would benefit from having researchers and practitioners use, manipulate, and further develop and refine them. Therefore, I discuss some implications for future practice and recommendations for future research in the sections below.
Implications for Future Practice

The list of 42 competencies that emerged from this study has implications for individual instructors, centers for teaching and learning or other units engaged in faculty professional development, and for institutions and their administrators. The purpose of this study was to provide the broader field of higher education something that it can work with as it navigates the rapid expansion in online learning and a diversity of online students. In particular, it is my hope that this list of competencies will equip instructors to better serve international students through the design and facilitation of online courses that are culturally inclusive.

Individual instructors can use these competencies in their future practice in two ways. The first is as a tool for self-assessment. By reading through the items, instructors can gauge to what extent they possess the knowledge, attitudes, and skills/behaviors implicated in each one. In this way, they can assess their own areas of strength as well as areas for growth. The second way instructors can make use of these competencies is to take one or several of them and gradually begin to integrate them into their online teaching practice.

Centers for teaching and learning or other units engaged in faculty/instructor professional development can use these competencies to influence the training they offer to instructors. They could, for example, develop a slate of trainings and resources around the most essential competencies or around specific ones for design and facilitation. Alternatively, organizers could survey instructors on their familiarity with
and confidence in implementing the various competencies and then design training
around the areas in which faculty need additional support.

Finally, institutions and their administrators can use these competencies to
shape future practice and policy. In the scholarly literature that I reviewed for this study,
many instructors expressed a low opinion of their ability to teach international students
effectively and wished that their institutions would do more to support them in these
efforts (Cao et al., 2014; Haan et al., 2017; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020a; Mahalingappa et
al., 2021). Institutional administrators should acknowledge that teaching online
international students in ways that are culturally inclusive and that promote their
academic success requires specific knowledge, attitudes and skills on the part of
instructors, and that these are not competencies that most instructors inherently
possess. In addition, as one expert in this study pointed out, designing learning
experiences for courses with diverse learners takes time, and even if instructors have
experience designing for and teaching international students, the time and effort it
takes to do it well and inclusively. This may prove challenging in the face of hectic
schedules and heavy course loads. At minimum, institutions need to provide instructors
with professional development opportunities to increase their abilities and confidence
in teaching international students effectively and equitably. As a next step, institutions
should reevaluate their expectations of online instructors along with how they assign
course loads and evaluate online teaching performance. Online instructors should be
given more time and more credit for the work required to teach online courses
inclusively. As a third step, the findings in this study should encourage institutions to
think more critically and carefully about what international students need in order to be successful in online courses and put systems, policies and resources into place to support these efforts.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study identified a list of competencies that help instructors promote cultural inclusion in their online courses to support the success of international students. However, there are several limitations to the findings from this research, as discussed above. In light of these limitations, I have identified several recommendations for future research.

The first recommendation is to conduct follow-up research with a different group of panelists who also have expertise in the areas of international education, international student support services, intercultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and instructional design for online learning in order to see to what degree they support the findings and how they would revise or add to them. The Delphi process is not about proving a hypothesis right or wrong but about continuing to refine our understanding of complex problems in ways that can inform practice and decision making. As such, it is expected that these findings will evolve over time and with the input of additional experts.

A second recommendation is to conduct further research into each individual competency. This will allow future researchers to gauge whether and to what extent the proposed competency is effective in promoting cultural inclusion and supporting the success of international students. Doing so could also potentially generate additional
guidance or annotations as to what each competency might look like in practice. For example, a researcher might explore what specific anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies and techniques are particularly effective in online environments. By conducting further research into individual competencies, future researchers could also further revise the statements to be more clear and succinct and adhere to the specific structure required of competency statements.

A third recommendation for future research is to further examine the perspectives of international students in online courses in this post-pandemic era and in light of the ever-evolving context of online learning. Doing so would allow researchers to assess whether the challenges currently facing students are similar or different to the ones that I identified in the literature and that informed this study. In addition, it would be valuable for future research to explore international student perspectives on the concept of cultural inclusion and the role that they themselves—as individuals with agency—play in actualizing it. It would also be interesting for researchers to examine the role of fellow students, and in particular native U.S. students, as well as the role of institutions in creating more culturally inclusive online learning environments.

A final recommendation is for future researchers to explore some of the areas of challenge, which experts in this study named as they brainstormed potential problems that international students and instructors may encounter in online courses that are not mentioned elsewhere in the literature. For example, it is possible that new challenges have emerged due to the effect of the pandemic on online learning and instruction as well as to the greater prominence of asynchronous learning. These topics include:
navigating differences in time zones; equitable access to technology, internet and 
resources; instructors struggling to foster engagement; and instructor increases in 
workload due to teaching international students online.

**A Concluding Note**

My goal in conducting this research was to highlight the influential role that 
culture has in shaping how humans teach and learn and to consider how this plays out 
in online courses. We are living through a time of growing awareness around the need 
to attend to cultural diversity in higher education and the importance of making online 
learning spaces more equitable. Cultural inclusion builds on these pivotal concepts of 
diversity and equity by fostering deliberate and sustained engagement with the 
experiences, perspectives and knowledge of those who are culturally different. In 
defining a list of competencies for what instructors should know and be able to do in 
order to create culturally inclusive online courses, I hoped to equip instructors to better 
support international students in online courses. There are multiple ways to put these 
competencies into practice. Instructors could use them as a tool for self-assessment or 
as knowledge, attitudes and behaviors they integrate directly into their online teaching 
practice in order to be more culturally inclusive. Centers for teaching and learning or 
other units engaged in faculty professional development could use them as a framework 
to guide the content of trainings they design. Finally, institutions and administrators 
could use them to shape future practice and policy in ways that better recognize, 
support and champion the importance of cultural inclusion online. Doing so will support 
the needs of international students and, ultimately, strengthen online offerings for
everyone by allowing students from all backgrounds to feel welcome, engaged, and successful in their learning.
APPENDIX A

IRB LETTER OF EXEMPT DETERMINATION

UMassAmherst
Human Research Protection Office

LETTER OF EXEMPT DETERMINATION

Date: December 8, 2020
To: Professor Cristine Smith and Kristen Heaster-Ekholm, College of Education
From: Professor Lynnette Leidy Sievert, Chair, University of Massachusetts Amherst IRB

Protocol Title: Ensuring culturally inclusive online courses for international students: A Delphi study to identify requisite instructor competencies
Protocol ID: 2459
Review Type: EXEMPT - NEW
Category: 2
Review Date: 12/08/2020
No Continuing Review Required
UM Award #: 

The Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) has reviewed the above named submission and has determined it to be EXEMPT from the federal regulations that govern human subject research (45 CFR 46.104)

Note: This determination applies only to the activities described in this submission. All changes to the submission (e.g. protocol, recruitment materials, consent form, additional personnel), must be reviewed by HRPO prior to implementation.

A project determined as EXEMPT, must still be conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Researchers must also comply with all applicable federal, state and local regulations as well as UMass Amherst Policies and procedures which may include obtaining approval of your activities from other institutions or entities. All personnel must complete CITI training.

Consent forms and study materials (e.g., questionnaires, letters, advertisements, flyers, scripts, etc.) - Only use the consent form and study materials that were reviewed by the HRPO.

Final Reports - Notify the IRB when your study is complete by submitting a Close Request Form in the electronic protocol system.

Serious Adverse Events and Unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others - All such events must be reported in the electronic system as soon as possible, but no later than five (5) working days.

Annual Check in - HRPO will conduct an annual check in to determine the study status.

Please contact the Human Research Protection Office if you have any further questions. Best wishes for a successful project.
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Recruitment Email

Subject: *Invitation to Contribute Your Expertise — Can we make the future of online learning more inclusive?*

Dear [Name],

Can we make the future of online learning more inclusive for students from different cultural and national backgrounds? I am writing to ask if you will contribute your expertise in a research project to help shape the future of instructional design practices.

My name is Lina Heaster-Ekholm and I am a doctoral candidate in the International Education concentration at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. As the research component for my dissertation, I have designed a Delphi study to uncover the key competencies (i.e. knowledge, attitudes and skills) U.S. instructors need in order to design online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students. You can learn more about my project in this 3-minute video.

You hold an essential piece to this puzzle. Your background and work in [tailored to participant] will provide a valuable perspective to this research and help shape future instructional design practices. It will also ensure that the knowledge, attitudes and skills identified are relevant to a wide community of practitioners and researchers.

Will you join me in this study? Your task will consist of completing five 15-30-minute online questionnaires over the next five months. These questionnaires lay out a process that invites you and your fellow experts (45 in all) to brainstorm, anonymously exchange ideas, rate and prioritize various items, and build consensus around a set of the most important competencies. You can find additional details about my study in this FAQ document.

Please respond to this email by [Date], letting me know whether you are willing to participate. I am also more than happy to answer any additional questions you have. I am hoping to complete recruitment for this study and to launch the first questionnaire within the next few weeks.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Lina Heaster-Ekholm
You, or someone you know, have likely had an experience this past year with online learning and you may have some strong feelings about it. I am someone who is very excited about online learning. I think it has enormous potential to provide people access to education — especially higher education. However, online learning is still an emerging field for research and practice, and there’s so much we don’t yet know. One area that hasn’t received much attention is the experience of international students online.

Historically, international students are those who “have crossed a national border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin”. But with virtual learning, physical borders no longer offer the constraints they used to. And now, with the global pandemic, we are seeing unprecedented numbers of international students enrolled in online courses.

So the good news is that the internet has opened up U.S. universities to global audiences. The bad news is that their courses are rarely designed with international learners in mind.

Online learning is different from face-to-face learning, and this affects international students in unique ways. For example: language barriers can be exacerbated online. The lack of visual cues and body language can make communication harder. And the text-based nature of interactions makes them more time consuming and cognitively demanding.

When instructors don’t recognize the additional challenges their international students face online, it can lead to discrimination and comments like: “this student is lazy” or “this student isn’t as smart as the others”. In short, when these differences go unacknowledged the resulting tension can inhibit learning and leave both students and instructors frustrated.

My research focuses on how to mitigate learning barriers caused by cultural differences. In my study, I ask what instructors need to know, believe and be able to do in order to create culturally inclusive online courses. Cultural inclusion means that instructors think about how their own cultural backgrounds influence what and how they teach, and try to understand and bridge differences between themselves and their students.

To answer my research question, I am recruiting 45 participants with expertise in online learning, cultural responsiveness, or international education. Over several rounds of survey, I will solicit their input and progressively build consensus as to what these competencies should be.
The resulting list of knowledge, attitudes and skills will give instructors a better idea of how to create inclusive courses and help them grow more attuned to diverse perspectives. The findings can also help campus administrators create better resources and training for their institutions. Ultimately, I hope my research can equip instructors to help students from all backgrounds feel welcome, engaged, and successful in their online learning.
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

What are the essential aspects of this study I should be aware of?
(Additional details are provided in Q&A format below.)
1. I am asking your consent to participate in this voluntary research study;
2. The purposes of this research is to identify instructor competencies that are essential to the design and facilitation of culturally inclusive online courses;
3. There are no anticipated risks to you as a result of participating in this project;
4. There is no direct benefit to you in participating in this research. However, indirect benefits include being a part of shaping and advancing the interdisciplinary discourse around the topic of culturally inclusive online courses, as well as potentially adding to your own understanding and practice. You will receive a copy of the final set of agreed upon competencies. In addition, as a token of thanks, I will make a donation to Kiron, a non-profit focused on providing online higher education solutions for refugees.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The end product of this study is a set of instructor competencies that you and other experts agree are essential to the design and facilitation of online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students. The resulting list of knowledge, attitudes and skills will give instructors a better idea of how to create inclusive courses and help them grow more attuned to diverse perspectives. The findings can also help campus administrators and Centers for Teaching and Learning create better resources and training for their institutions.

Who is conducting this research study?
My name is Lina Heaster-Ekholm and I am the Principal Investigator for this study. I am a doctoral candidate in the International Education concentration at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. This study is the research component for my dissertation. I have a background in instructional design and technology. My research interests lie at the intersection of culture and learning with the goal of developing effective instructional design practices to meet the needs of global online learners.

What is the background for this research study?
Online learning is still an emerging field for research and practice. One area that has not received much attention is the experiences of international students online. As a result of the current global pandemic, we are seeing unprecedented numbers of international students enrolled in U.S. online higher education courses. Unfortunately,
these courses are rarely designed with international learners in mind. Despite evidence that learner characteristics such as attention, motivation, prior skills and knowledge are profoundly shaped by culture, culture is rarely a consideration in the design and facilitation of online courses. When cultural differences go unacknowledged and unreconciled, international students report feeling frustrated, uncomfortable and alienated. The resulting tension can inhibit learning and leave both students and instructors dissatisfied.

Where will it take place and who can participate?
This study will take place online. I am recruiting 30-45 adult participants for this study who have expertise in one of three relevant fields: online learning, culturally responsive pedagogy/cultural competence, and international education. I will select participants who meet the criteria of having established local or global reputation in the field; a record of scholarship and publication on the topic; membership in a relevant and respected professional association; and/or evidence of personal experience to draw from and share.

What will I be asked to do and how much time will it take?
This study is scheduled to begin April 2021 and conclude no later than July 2021. During this period, I will ask you to complete 3-5 questionnaires. Each questionnaire should take around 30 minutes to complete, meaning a total time commitment of no more than 2.5 hours. You will have 2 weeks to complete each questionnaire from the time you receive it. Between each questionnaire round, I will take up to 2 weeks to analyze and synthesize responses before sharing the information back to you.

Round 1: (April) Contribute competencies
Round 2: (May) Verify accuracy and add to ideas
Round 3: (June) Rank competencies to build consensus
Round 4: (July) (As needed) Rank competencies
Round 5: (July) (As needed) Final round to reach consensus

What will I gain from participating in this research study?
There is no direct benefit to you in participating in this research. Although, you could experience a boost in serotonin that often accompanies acts of kindness, and you will certainly earn my deep appreciation for supporting the work of an emerging scholar. An indirect benefit, is that you will have the opportunity to shape and advance the interdisciplinary discourse around the timely and nascent topic of culturally inclusive online courses. You may find that your own awareness and competence also grow as a result of your interaction with other experts. At the conclusion of the study, you will receive a copy of the competencies that have been identified and refined through the
Delphi process. Lastly, your participation will directly contribute towards a social good. At the end of this study I will make a donation to Kiron, a non-profit focused on providing online higher education solutions for refugees. Every questionnaire you complete will add $1 to the final donation tally.

What are the potential risks of participating in this research study?
The questionnaires will be administered through an online survey platform and can be completed where and when you choose. There are no questions of a sensitive nature. Given these factors, along with the experienced nature of the participant group, there are minimal anticipated risks to you from this project. However, a risk of breach of confidentiality always exists and I am taking steps to minimize this risk as outlined in the section below answering “How will my personal information be protected?”.

What happens if I say yes, but change my mind later?
If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences to you if you decide that you no longer want to participate.

How will my personal information be protected?
Your identity is not anonymous since it is known to me (the researcher). However, I am taking steps to safeguard the confidentiality of your responses and your identity from others. In order to minimize the risk of breaches of confidentiality, I am a) using passwords to safeguard access to the survey software, files, and my laptop; b) only collecting personal information from you that is essential to the research; c) using codes instead of names on exported data, and storing the master key linking codes and names in a separate and secure location; d) summarizing research findings so that there is no identifiable information to link specific responses back to you. In addition, all electronic data files related to this study will be destroyed 3 years after the close of the study.

At the end of the study, I will give you the opportunity to be credited as a contributor to the study. This is my way to acknowledge and thank you and other experts who have contributed to this research. You will have a chance to review the study findings prior to electing to be named or not. If you elect to be named, your name will appear in the appendices of my dissertation; no specific data or responses will be linked to your identity. If you wish to remain anonymous, you will not be named in the appendices. After the conclusion of this study, I will incorporate the findings into my dissertation and may also share the findings at conferences or publish them.

Who can I talk to if I have questions or concerns about this research study?
I am happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have questions about this project or if you have a problem accessing the software, please contact me (Lina Heaster-Ekholm) at 413-345-5586 or kheasterekho@umass.edu. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or humansubjects@ora.umass.edu.

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT
By selecting the “I Consent” button I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this research study. I have had a chance to read and understand the information provided with this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions prior to beginning this research study, and have received satisfactory answers if I did. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty. I also understand that a copy of this Informed Consent Form is available to me should I wish to review or download it.
APPENDIX D

ROUND 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

[The actual questionnaire was distributed to participants through Welphi, a software designed for Delphi studies. This document served as a template.]

Page 1: Welcome Message
Welcome!
Thank you for your willingness to participate in this Delphi study. Your expertise and input is critical in making this research project a success.

Here are 5 important things to know about participating in this study:

● The purpose of this research is to identify and reach consensus on the key competencies U.S. instructors need in order to design culturally inclusive online courses for international students.
● Today’s questionnaire is the first of three to five 30-minute questionnaires I will ask you to complete over the course of three to five months.
● You will receive a copy of the final set of agreed upon competencies.
● As a token of appreciation for your participation in this study, I will make a donation to Kiron [link], a non-profit focused on providing online higher education solutions for refugees. Every questionnaire you complete over the course of this research project will add $1 to the final donation tally.
● If you would like a brief overview of the context and purpose of this research project, you can view this 3 minute video [link] (or read a copy [link] of the video text).

Additional information about this study is detailed on the next page, so that you can provide your informed consent to participate.

Navigating Welphi & Saving Your Responses
● You do not need to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. However, each time you return, you will need to login and click through the introductory pages to find where you left off.
● You can use the Back or Next buttons at the bottom of the pages to navigate through this questionnaire.
• To save your responses on any page, click the Next button. If you close the application or browser before clicking Next, the content you’ve added to that page will be lost.

Deadline
• Please complete this questionnaire no later than Thursday, April 2nd, 2021.
• At the end of round one, I will compile the responses and share them back with you at the beginning of round two.

Page 2: Informed Consent

Page 3: Scenario

In order to provide common ground for answering the questions in this study, please keep this basic scenario in mind as you proceed:

An instructor at a U.S. university is preparing to teach an online course next semester.

• Approximately 40% of the students enrolling in the course will be international students.

• International students are students enrolled in higher education institutions outside their country of origin. They may or may not be physically residing in the U.S. while participating in their course of study.

• Consider what differences the instructor might encounter in this course versus a previous one they taught with no international students enrolled in it.

• What knowledge, attitudes and skills might they need to address these differences effectively?

Helpful Tips & Resources

• Don’t worry about trying to come up with exhaustive answers to the questions! Simply view the question through the lens of your expertise and experience, and write down the ideas that easily come to mind. (During Round 2, you will have another opportunity to add any items you think of after you press the submit button.)

• Keep the recommendations you make general enough so that they can apply across multiple disciplines as well as at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

• I have compiled a Glossary [link] of some of the key terms I am using in this study. You may want to open it in a separate tab and consult it as needed while you complete the survey.

• If you prefer to think through the questions before entering your answers into the questionnaire, you can preview a copy of Round 1 questions [link] here.
Page 4: Question 1
Take one minute to brainstorm as many ideas as you can for each prompt below. The goal is not to come up with a comprehensive list, but rather to get you thinking about the types of challenges international students or their instructors might experience in online courses. [Type your answers where it says “click to add your answer”].

A. What challenges might international students encounter in online courses?
B. What challenges might instructors of international students encounter in online courses?

Page 5: Question 2
What specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills do instructors need in order to DESIGN culturally inclusive online learning experiences for international students?

By design [link], I mean the process of creating learning content and activities (i.e. what is commonly thought of as course preparation). Design generally takes place before the course is live and precedes facilitation, which you will address in Question 3. For each item you suggest below, please also provide a brief rationale. Since respondents may articulate the same or similar ideas in different ways, this elaboration will help me more accurately analyze and group responses for future rounds. [If you can’t decide whether a competency you come up with fits best as a knowledge, attitude or skill, simply choose one and don’t become overly concerned about fitting it in the “right” category.]

A. What knowledge [link] (in addition to content knowledge) do instructors need to have and why?
B. What attitudes [link] do instructors need to exhibit and why?
C. What skills [link] do instructors need to possess and why?

Page 6: Question 3
What specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills do instructors need in order to FACILITATE culturally inclusive online learning experiences for international students?

By facilitation [link] I mean the process of leading students through learning content and activities (i.e. what is commonly thought of as teaching). Facilitation generally follows design and takes place during the course. Again, for each item you suggest below, please also provide a brief rationale to help me more accurately analyze and group your responses for future rounds.

A. What knowledge [link] (in addition to content knowledge) do instructors need to have and why?
B. What attitudes [link] do instructors need to exhibit and why?
C. What skills [link] do instructors need to possess and why?

Page 7: Expertise & Demographic Questions
Your Expertise
Your answer to these 8 questions will help me describe the collective technical expertise of respondents in this study. You can type “Prefer not to answer” for any question you do not want to answer.

How many years of professional experience do you have working in the field of higher education?
- [box]

Are you currently working in higher education?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Select the option that best describes your level of expertise in each of the areas below:
- Online Learning or Instructional Design
- Culturally Responsive Pedagogy or (Inter) Cultural Competence
- International Education or International Student Support Services
- None
- Novice (basic knowledge or experience)
- Competent (some knowledge and experience)
- Expert (advanced knowledge and experience)
- Prefer not to answer

Approximately how many online courses have you designed and/or facilitated (taught) over the course of your career?
- None
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-9
- 10-15
- >15
- Prefer not to answer
Approximately how many online courses that you designed and/or facilitated (taught) have included international students?
- I haven’t designed or facilitated any online courses
- None
- A few
- Most
- All
- I don’t know
- Prefer not to answer

Approximately how many in-person (not online) courses have you designed and/or facilitated over the course of your career?
- None
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-9
- 10-15
- >15
- Prefer not to answer

If you have worked with or supported international students in another capacity (apart from designing and/or facilitating courses) please briefly describe this work.

General Characteristics
Your answer to the next 4 questions will help me describe the general characteristics of respondents in this study. Due to the software, I am not able to ask you to “check all that apply”. For any question to which you want to give a more nuanced answer, you can use the text box below it to provide your response. I apologize for this limitation.

Were you an international student at any point in your educational journey?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

If you answered yes to the question above, please provide a few additional details about your time as an international student including host country, level of study, and length of study.
[box]

Which of the following best describes you? (Gender)
- Agender
- Gender-fluid
- Gender-queer
- Non-binary
- Man
- Woman
- Prefer not to answer
- Prefer to self describe below
- [Box] Self-describe

Which of the following best describes you? (Ethnic / Racial Background)
- African
- African American
- Arab American
- Asian
- Asian American
- Black Caribbean
- Caucasian / White
- Hispanic / Latinx
- Middle Eastern
- Native American / Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- South Asian
- Prefer not to answer
- Not listed here or prefer to self-describe below [box]

Page 8: Thank You.
You have reached the end of this questionnaire. Your responses will be recorded once you click the Logout button. I will compile everyone’s answers and share the responses back with you in two weeks at the beginning of Round 2.

As a reminder, there will be 3-5 questionnaires in total:
● Round 1: (Current questionnaire) Brainstorm competencies
● Round 2: (May) Verify accuracy and add to ideas
● Round 3: (June) Rank competencies to build consensus
● Round 4: (July) (As needed) Rank competencies
● Round 5: (July) (As needed) Final round to reach consensus
In the meantime, I welcome you to contact me with any comments or questions (kheasterekho@umass.edu).

Thank you!
APPENDIX E

ROUND 2 QUESTIONNAIRE

[The actual questionnaire was distributed to participants through Welphi, a software designed for Delphi studies. This document served as a template.]

Page 1: Welcome Message
Welcome Back!
Thank you for your fantastic input to Round 1 and your ongoing support for my dissertation research on how to create culturally inclusive online courses for international students. Your expertise is critical in making this project a success.

A total of 29 participants (out of 35) submitted responses in Round 1. After multiple rounds of coding, sorting, and refining, I have distilled the suggestions from over 400 comments into 100 competency statements. This is still a large number of items — which is why I need your help distilling the list even further in this round! I promise it won’t be as intimidating as it sounds. Read on to learn more about your task for this round.

Round 2 Task
The goal of this round is to verify and further refine the list of competencies and to make sure nothing critical is missing.

- **Question 1** asks you to rate the level of helpfulness of each item.
- **Question 2** asks you if your contributions from Round 1 are fairly represented in Round 2.
- **Question 3** asks if there are any important competencies missing from the list. (You may want to jot down your ideas as you proceed through the questionnaire so that they’re easy to recall.)

Bonus Incentive
Many of you have just made it — or are about to make it — through an extremely challenging academic year. Congratulations and well done! Knowing how hard it may be to muster the energy to complete this questionnaire, I want to add a little extra incentive. For this round, I will double donations to Kiron, a non-profit focused on providing online higher education solutions for refugees. So for each completed questionnaire I receive for Round 2, I will add $2 to the final donation tally. Also, I hope you get a little boost in serotonin from knowing how incredibly grateful I am for your contributions to this project.

Navigating Welphi & Saving Your Responses
As with Round 1, you do not need to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. However, each time you return, you will need to login and click through the pages to find where you left off.

You can use the Back or Next buttons at the bottom of the pages to navigate through this questionnaire.

To save your responses on any page, click the Next button. If you close the application or browser before clicking Next, the content you’ve added to that page will be lost.

Deadline

Please complete this questionnaire no later than **Wednesday, June 16**.

Page 2: Scenario

In order to provide common ground for answering the questions in this round, please keep this basic scenario in mind as you proceed:

*The Center for Teaching and Learning on your university campus is planning to design a series of trainings to equip instructors to create culturally inclusive online courses for international students. They are asking for your help in identifying what competencies would be most important to include in these training sessions.*

Rate each competency on the following page on how helpful you think it is in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students using a 5-point scale (Not at all helpful; Slightly helpful; Moderately helpful; Very helpful; Extremely / Most helpful).

Helpful Tips & Resources

- Assume that knowledge, attitudes and skills can all be effectively addressed in a training.

- **Use the Comment tool** if you would like to add a note to any competency, such as something you feel strongly about, an explanation for your choice, or a suggestion for an edit or revision. To do so, click the text bubble icon next to the competency you want to comment on. Type your comments in the popup box and select “Save”.

- I have loosely sorted the competencies into 5 general categories: Educational Philosophy; Technical / Design; Curriculum / Content; Instructional Activities; and Relational Connection / Support. Don’t be overly concerned about what item is grouped where. These categories are simply intended to make the list more manageable and help you better engage with the items.
If you would like to see all of the competencies in one place, you can view this complete Competency Matrix.

Page 3: Rate Competencies
How helpful is each competency listed below in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students? (Remember that you can select the speech bubble icon to include a comment on any competency.)

[Welphi likert-type rating buttons]

Page 4: Round 1 Verification
Do you feel that your contributions from Round 1 are fairly represented in the competency list provided for Round 2?

- Yes
- No

If you selected “No” above, please describe what ideas or important nuances I have left out, overlooked or misrepresented: [text box]

Page 5: Additional Suggestions
Are there any key knowledge, attitudes or skills missing from the competency list that you would like to see added? If so, please list them below. [text box]

Page 6: Thank You Message
You have reached the end of this questionnaire. Your responses will be recorded once you click the Logout button. I will compile everyone’s answers and share them back with you in a few weeks at the beginning of Round 3.

The timeline for the remaining rounds has been updated:

- **Round 1: (Completed) Brainstorm competencies**
- **Round 2: (Current round) Verify accuracy, rate competencies and add to ideas**
- **Round 3: (July) Rank competencies to build consensus**
- **Round 4: (July - if needed) Final round to reach consensus**

In the meantime, I welcome you to contact me with any comments or questions (kheasterekho@umass.edu).
Thank you!
APPENDIX F

COMPLETE COMPETENCY MATRIX

[Participants were asked to rate each competency in the table on how helpful they thought it was in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students using a 5-point scale: Not at all helpful; Slightly helpful; Moderately helpful; Very helpful; Extremely / Most helpful) The round 2 questionnaire was distributed to participants using Welphi software and formatted to the specifications of that system.]

In order to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students, instructors will...

<table>
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<tr>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>ATTITUDE</th>
<th>SKILL / BEHAVIOR</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY [17]</strong></td>
<td>• Be familiar with key ways online pedagogy and teaching methods differ from face-to-face pedagogy and teaching.</td>
<td>• Interrogate their pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others.</td>
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<td>• Be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that promote access and inclusion.</td>
<td>• Want to be a ‘guide on the side’ rather than a ‘sage on the stage’ or a gatekeeper of knowledge.</td>
<td>• Make the Hidden Curriculum visible so that students are able to see the values and norms guiding the course.</td>
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<td>• Recognize ways that academic neocolonialism and imperialism are embedded in US academic structures.</td>
<td>• Have the desire to learn from and with students.</td>
<td>• Demonstrate intercultural competence (i.e. the ability to function effectively across cultures; to think and act appropriately; and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds).</td>
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<td>• Have knowledge of the history of power and privilege in their students' own cultural contexts.</td>
<td>• Have a positive mindset towards online teaching and learning.</td>
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<td>• Be familiar with a variety of frameworks for understanding</td>
<td>• Believe that student diversity enriches the learning space.</td>
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<td>• Exhibit openness, curiosity, and empathy, which are facets of intercultural competence.</td>
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<td>• Be motivated to continually assess their teaching practices to ensure they are</td>
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| TECHNICAL / DESIGN [23] | cultural dimensions and differences.  
- Recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure.  
- Be familiar with the differences between a student-centered approach and a content-centered approach to instruction. | accommodating the needs of diverse students.(8)  
- Be willing to seek out and learn from critiques of their online course designs.  
- Be willing to take risks in areas where they may not be successful at first and see these as growth opportunities rather than failure.  
- Exhibit compassion for students who are unfamiliar with U.S. class format by adapting the course design to their needs.  
- Embrace the concept of a course as an engagement- | Utilize equity rubrics that take a diverse set of students into account.  
- Design and organize the online environment and material so that it is intuitive and easy to navigate.  
- Imagine the student online experience and build in resources to help them succeed (e.g. videos explaining how to use the LMS or access library materials, etc.).  
- Be adept at basic digital operations such as uploading files, editing online content, and creating hyperlinks. |


| CURRICULUM / CONTENT [16] | - Be familiar with basic elements of user interface design and technical writing.  
- Be familiar with features and settings within the campus LMS that can be adapted for global learners (e.g. language preferences; time zones; etc.).  
- Be familiar with Open Access content and Open Source tools.  
- Recognize the importance of video captions for those who rely on them to comprehend content and specialized vocabulary.  
- Have knowledge of students’ unique contexts and backgrounds and contexts and how these may influence their learning online (e.g. educational; economic; cultural; social; technological; disability; etc.).  
- Have familiarity with translation engines in order to understand the pros and cons students encounter when they use them. | experiential environment rather than a delivery vehicle.  
- Select the appropriate technology, tools and resources with consideration for what materials might be unavailable or inaccessible to students (e.g. due to cost; firewalls or bandwidth issues, etc.).  
- Scaffold and chunk instruction to incrementally build on students’ prior learning and intersperse activities that allow students to frequently discuss, analyze, reflect.  
- Create peer-to-peer learning opportunities.  
- Address issues around accessibility proactively.  
- Record audio and video content.  
- Caption videos or make use of captioning services.  
- Provide IT troubleshooting support to students. | - Recognize cultural assumptions and biases that underlie the course discipline and topics.  
- Have cultural humility to acknowledge that their course content is based on culturally-  
include multiple means of presenting content (e.g. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES [20]</th>
<th>(individual)</th>
<th>- Accept that different learners benefit from different teaching methods.</th>
<th>- Cultural humility to acknowledge that their teaching methodology is based on</th>
<th>- Provide multiple ways for students to engage with the content.</th>
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<td><strong>(readings; materials; resources; examples; lectures)</strong></td>
<td>● Have knowledge of the subject matter in a global light (i.e. outside of a U.S. or primarily Western context).</td>
<td>● Have humility to recognize that they do not have all the answers.</td>
<td>● Integrate culturally relevant resources into course content.</td>
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<td>● Be familiar with multiple perspectives on the course topics.</td>
<td>● Exhibit a growth mindset to seek out new types of content for their course.</td>
<td>● Include media that is representative of different cultures, races, and ethnicities.</td>
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<td>● Exhibit enthusiasm for diverse global perspectives about course topics.</td>
<td>● Engage students about their culture and context without ‘putting them on the spot’ or asking them to speak for the country, culture or people with whom they identify.</td>
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<td>● Model that there is no right or wrong in discussing differing thoughts and opinions.</td>
<td>● Articulate the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are needed for the course and recommendations for what students can do if they lack some of these.</td>
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<td>● Identify key terms and ‘threshold concepts’ of this area of study for students.</td>
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<td>● Explain content in a simple and understandable way.</td>
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<td>● Include and/or invite multiple perspectives around course topics.</td>
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| Assignments; group assignments; discussions; feedback; assessment | addressing high-stakes topics in synchronous and asynchronous environments.  
- Recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student's second+ language can affect comprehension, expression, and demonstration of learning.  
- Be familiar with a variety of strategies for constructing multicultural groups for online course projects or activities.  
- Be aware of concerns around the equity of various assessment methods. | Culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.  
- Be patient with discussions that take more time as students navigate multiple languages.  
- Be patient with the learning curve that exists for students to familiarize themselves with the online technology and tools being used.  
- Be open to how students engage with material, since they may not engage with the material the way the instructor anticipated.  
- Be accommodating to students who need additional time or assistance for assignments and assessments. | Create opportunities for students to intentionally and explicitly connect their daily work to larger academic and life goals.  
- Invite students to make sense of topics starting from their own perspective, rather than all starting from the same perspective/assumption.  
- Structure activities and exercises so that students are able to share their expertise, experiences, and culturally relevant resources.  
- Address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings, and microaggressions in class interactions early and often.  
- Articulate the level of written and spoken language skills required to succeed in the course.  
- Provide clear structure, guidelines and expectations for assignments, group work and assessments.  
- Use a variety of ways to check for student comprehension throughout the class sessions. |
| RELATIONAL CONNECTION / SUPPORT [24] | • Be familiar with research-based strategies to create a welcoming and inclusive online course environment.  
• Be aware of types of practical and emotional support that students need in order to acclimate to an online course.  
• Recognize potential challenges associated with building trust among students from non-dominant cultures with students and instructors from dominant cultures.  
• Have general knowledge about different countries and cultures, including geography and current events.  
• Have specific knowledge of holidays or other major cultural events that students observe and that will take place during | • Have a friendly demeanor and an interest in getting to know students.  
• Accept that online courses need more effort than face-to-face classes to create social connections between students and between instructor and student.  
• Be attuned to the humanity of someone whom they only see in text or via digital recording.  
• Be willing to be available at times when students can access them, including across time zones.  
• Be resilient and cheerful in the face of inevitable technical glitches.  
• Have vulnerability to disclose when things online are complicated. | • Allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge so that evidence of mastery does not privilege some students over others.  
• Discern when students are working on external things (i.e. multitasking and/or not paying attention) and re-engage them.  
• Facilitate opportunities for students to connect with the instructor and each other to develop a sense of trust, community and belonging.  
• Humanize the online environment using appropriate technological tools (e.g. by using video to introduce the course or show how to navigate the course environment; creating a liquid syllabus; etc.).  
• Avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups.  
• Create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching the instructor for help or with questions.  
• Utilize a brief survey to get a sense of students and their |
| | the course.  
- Be familiar with resources the institution offers to international students and how students can make the best use of general academic and non-academic student support services. | backgrounds, situational factors, and aspirations and to inform the course.  
- Pronounce students' names correctly.  
- Flip or code-switch communication styles from Linear-Direct to Elliptical-Indirect and use High-Context or Face-Giving communication styles in order to make and maintain trust, respect, and harmony.  
- Observe the virtual space acutely to pick up on what is not being said as a form of non-verbal communication.  
- Connect students who are in similar situations (e.g. those working on the same access challenges; having similar learning strategies; living in similar time zones; etc.)  
- Advocate for students' needs outside of the classroom setting.  
- Practice good time management in order to balance the responsibilities of "around the clock" facilitation with healthy boundaries around personal time. |
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- Practice self-care.
APPENDIX G

ROUND 3 QUESTIONNAIRE

[The actual questionnaire was distributed to participants through Welphi, a software designed for Delphi studies. This document served as a template.]

Page 1: Welcome Message
Welcome Back
We have made it to the final round of this study! Thank you for all of the input and energy you have contributed so far as well as your participation in this third and final round.

Round 2 Report Back
A total of 25 participants submitted responses to Round 2, which asked you to rate 100 instructor competencies on a 5-point scale in terms of how helpful each is in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students. There was considerable concordance in the ratings you and your fellow experts assigned to the competencies:

- 58 competencies had a mode* rating of “Extremely / Most helpful”.
- 39 competencies had a mode rating of “Very helpful”.
- 3 competencies had a mode rating of “Moderately helpful”.
- No competencies had mode ratings of “Slightly helpful” or “Not at all helpful”.
- In fact, only 5 competencies (out of 100) received any “Not at all helpful” ratings (with 4 of these competencies receiving one “not at all helpful” rating and 1 competency receiving two “not at all helpful” ratings).

In other words, a majority of experts rated most competencies as either very or extremely helpful in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students.

* The mode is the most frequently occurring rating for each item. Here is a complete list of the competencies and a summary of their ratings including mode, median and standard deviation scores.

Round 3 Task
Given this level of agreement among experts, another round of rating is unlikely to affect or trim the results significantly. So for this final round, I want to see whether there is agreement around what the most essential competencies instructors need. To
accomplish this, we will use an interactive ranking process called a Q-sort. A Q-sort asks you to order and rank statements on a pyramid-shaped grid.

Round 3 includes 52 competencies that 51% or more of experts rated as “Extremely / Most helpful” or “Very helpful” in Round 2:

- 15 knowledge competencies
- 17 attitude competencies
- 20 skill competencies.

You will complete a separate Q-sort for each of these 3 categories.

Deadline

- Please complete this questionnaire no later than **Wednesday, August 4.**
- **As with previous rounds, you do not need to complete the entire questionnaire in one sitting.** However, you will need to complete each of the Q-sort rounds in one sitting in order for your rankings to be recorded.

Page 2: Scenario

In order to provide common ground for answering the questions in this round, please keep in mind and build on the scenario from the previous round:

*The Center for Teaching and Learning on your university campus is planning to design a series of trainings to equip instructors to create culturally inclusive online courses for international students. They are asking for your help in identifying what competencies would be most important to include in these training sessions. Rank each competency according to how essential you think it is in equipping instructors to design and facilitate online courses that are culturally inclusive for international students.*
Helpful Tips

- Try to distinguish between competencies you think will be particularly impactful for international students versus those that are more generally important for online teaching.

- You will have the chance to review how your fellow experts ranked each competency in Round 2, along with your own previous ranking of each item. You will also be able to read comments made by your fellow experts.
  - Think of these ratings and comments as an ongoing dialogue and how they might influence, alter, or strengthen your current thoughts on the topic of how instructors can create culturally inclusive online courses for international students. They should help inform your thinking.
  - However, there are no right or wrong answers to this exercise. The best answer is the one that reflects your individual opinion, belief, or feeling.

Page 3: Rank Knowledge Competencies

KNOWLEDGE Q-Sort

1) Complete the KNOWLEDGE Q-sort:
Click on this link to open the KNOWLEDGE Q-sort. You will need to enter the unique participation code I sent you in the Round 3 Launch email on July 22 in order to access the Q-sort (enter the same code for each of the 3 Q-Sorts). (You may want to open these Q-sort Instructions in a new tab and refer to them as needed while you move through this questionnaire).

2) Optional Comments:
Once you have completed the KNOWLEDGE competencies Q-Sort, use the box below to provide any additional comments you would like to share (e.g. an explanation for one or more of your rankings; respond to or elaborate on peer comments from Round 2; etc.)

3) Optional Suggestions:
Here is a link to the KNOWLEDGE competencies that did not make the final list for ranking (i.e. that did not receive a collective rating of “most / extremely” or “very helpful” by greater than 50% of experts in Round 2). Are there any that you feel strongly should still be included? Please mention them in the box below and provide a brief rationale.

Page 4: Rank Attitude Competencies

ATTITUDE Q-Sort
1) Complete the ATTITUDE Q-sort:
Click on this [link to open the ATTITUDE Q-sort](#). You will need to enter the unique participation code I sent you in the Round 3 Launch email on July 22 in order to access the Q-sort (enter the same code for each of the 3 Q-Sorts). *(Here are the Q-sort Instructions again if you need them).*

2) Optional Comments:
Once you have completed the ATTITUDE competencies Q-Sort, use the box below to provide any additional comments you would like to share (e.g. an explanation for one or more of your rankings; respond to or elaborate on peer comments from Round 2; etc.)

3) Optional Suggestions:
Here is a link to the ATTITUDE competencies that did not make the final list for ranking (i.e. that did not receive a collective rating of “most / extremely” or “very helpful” by greater than 50% of experts in Round 2). Are there any that you feel strongly should still be included? Please mention them in the box below and provide a brief rationale.

Page 5: Rank Skill Competencies

SKILL Q-Sort

1) Complete the SKILL Q-sort:
Click on this [link to open the SKILL Q-sort](#). You will need to enter the unique participation code I sent you in the Round 3 Launch email on July 22 in order to access the Q-sort (enter the same code for each of the 3 Q-Sorts). *(Here are the Q-sort Instructions again if you need them).*

2) Optional Comments:
Once you have completed the SKILL competencies Q-Sort, use the box below to provide any additional comments you would like to share (e.g. an explanation for one or more of your rankings; respond to or elaborate on peer comments from Round 2; etc.)

3) Optional Suggestions:
Here is a link to the SKILL competencies that did not make the final list for ranking (i.e. that did not receive a collective rating of “most / extremely” or “very helpful” by greater than 50% of experts in Round 2). Are there any that you feel strongly should still be included? Please mention them in the box below and provide a brief rationale.

Page 6: Thank You Message
You have reached the end of this questionnaire. Your responses will be recorded once you click the Logout button. This will also mark the completion of your participation in this research study. If you would like, you can view a graphic that summarizes the process we’ve gone through together.

As promised at the outset, I will share the findings back with you once I have analyzed Round 3 responses. At that point, I will also share an update on the final donation tally your responses have helped to raise for Kiron.

In the meantime, I welcome you to contact me with any comments or questions (kheasterekho@umass.edu). Thank you sincerely for sharing so generously of your time and expertise. Your input has been invaluable in making this project a success.

Sincerely,
Lina
APPENDIX H

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING A Q-SORT

- Watch this 2-minute video if you would like a visual introduction to completing a Q-sort: [link].
- Remember, there are no right or wrong answers in this activity. The best answer is the one that reflects your individual opinion, belief, or feeling.

1. **Launch the Q-Sort.**
   - a. Click on the link provided on the Welphi questionnaire page. The Q-sort is web-based, so you will not need to download or install anything.
   - b. *Note that each of the competency sets (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) will have a link to a separate Q-sort.*

2. **Enter your unique participation code.**
   - a. Select “YES” to the question of whether you have been provided a participation code, and enter the unique code I sent you in your email.
   - b. Please enter the same code for each of the 3 Q-Sorts.

3. **Consent to participate.**
   - a. You will be prompted to consent to the study. Select “I AGREE”.
   - b. (Since you already provided your consent in Round 1, this step isn’t necessary but it is a built-in feature of the software that can’t be removed.)

4. **Pre-Sort your responses.**
   - a. This optional pre-sort step gives you the opportunity to read and think about each of the statements before ranking them.
   - b. Each card lists a competency that you and your fellow experts determined was “very helpful” or “most / extremely helpful” in the last round of this study.
   - c. Read each card, then click the icon below it that aligns most with your view.
   - d. Don’t worry about “mis-ranking” a competency at this stage. You can change the sorting and ranking of each statement in the next step.
5. **Sort and rank the statements.**
   a. Drag and drop each card onto the area of the distribution grid that aligns best with your opinion.
   b. The furthest left box is for the competency that you believe is least essential, as compared to the others in the selection. Columns to the right increase in importance, with the box furthest to the right reserved for the competency from the selection that you believe is most essential.
   c. Boxes within a column do not represent different ranks; e.g. the box at the top of the pyramid does not have a higher ranking than the box below it. In other words, you do not need to worry about ranking competencies within columns, only between columns.
   d. You can only drop one competency into each box. However, you can move cards around after you have initially placed them.
   e. Use the zoom in (+) button on the left side of the screen to enlarge the Q-grid and make the statements easier to read. Click the zoom out (-) button to view the entire grid.

6. **Submit your response.**
   a. Once you are satisfied with how you have ranked the items on your grid, click the “SUBMIT” button.
   b. Complete one Q-sort for each of the 3 areas: knowledge, attitudes and skills.
KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND SKILLS Q-SORT SET-UP

[Participants accessed anc completed the Q-sorts using Q Method, a software designed for Q-method studies. This document served as a template.]

CONSENT MANAGEMENT

Please select the yellow “I AGREE” button in order to proceed with the Q-Sort. Since you already provided your consent to participate in this study in Round 1, this step isn’t necessary. However, it is a built-in feature of the software that can’t be removed.

INSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

To complete the Q-Sort, drag and drop each statement card onto the area of the distribution grid that aligns best with your opinion.

The furthest left box is for the competency that you believe is least essential, as compared to the others in the selection. Columns to the right increase in importance, with the box furthest to the right reserved for the competency from the selection that you believe is most essential.

Boxes within a column do not represent different ranks; e.g. the box at the top of the pyramid does not have a higher ranking than the box below it. In other words, you do not need to worry about ranking competencies within columns, only between columns.

If you’d like to refer to the ratings and comments for KNOWLEDGE competencies from Round 2, you can open this document in a separate tab [link].

If you’d like to refer to the ratings and comments for ATTITUDE competencies from Round 2, you can open this document in a separate tab [link].

If you’d like to refer to the ratings and comments for SKILL competencies from Round 2, you can open this document in a separate tab [link].

Think of these ratings and comments as an ongoing dialogue around the topic of how instructors can create culturally inclusive online courses for international students. They can help inform your thinking. However, remember that there are no right or wrong answers to this exercise. The best answer is the one that reflects your individual opinion, belief, or feeling.
(You can click the question mark icon (?) from within the Q-Sort page to view these instructions again.)

PRESORT MANAGEMENT

This optional pre-sort step gives you the opportunity to read and think about each of the statements before ranking them. For each statement, click the dashboard icon below it that aligns most with your view (Right icon = Most Essential; Middle icon = Essential; Left icon = Less Essential). Don’t worry about “mis-ranking” a competency at this stage. You can change the sorting and ranking of each statement in the next step. You can skip this pre-sort step at any point by selecting the "Begin Q-Sort" button.

Q-SORT MANAGEMENT

Drag and drop each card onto the area of the distribution grid that aligns best with your opinion.

The furthest left box is for the competency that you believe is least essential, as compared to the others in the selection. Columns to the right increase in importance, with the box furthest to the right reserved for the competency from the selection that you believe is most essential.

Boxes within a column do not represent different ranks; e.g. the box at the top of the pyramid does not have a higher ranking than the box below it. In other words, you do not need to worry about ranking competencies within columns, only between columns.

COMPLETION MANAGEMENT

Thank you for completing the [Knowledge / Attitude / Skills] Q-sort. Please return to the Welphi questionnaire and complete the optional two prompts concerning [Knowledge / Attitude / Skills] competencies and/or complete the next Q-sort.
## APPENDIX I

### ROUND 2 COMPETENCY RATING RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Not at all helpful</th>
<th>Slightly helpful</th>
<th>Moderately helpful</th>
<th>Very helpful</th>
<th>Extremely / Most helpful</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>MODE</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that student diversity enriches the learning space.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have cultural humility to acknowledge that their course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching the instructor for help or with questions.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural humility to acknowledge that their teaching methodology is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate intercultural competence (i.e. the ability to function effectively across cultures; to think and act appropriately; and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds).</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit openness, curiosity and empathy, which are facets of intercultural competence.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize cultural assumptions and biases that underlie the course discipline and topics.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit enthusiasm for diverse global perspectives about course topics.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogate their pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions in class interactions early and often.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Area</td>
<td>Knowledge (KN)</td>
<td>Skill (SK)</td>
<td>Score (%)</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Average Score</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate opportunities for students to connect with the instructor and each other to develop a sense of trust, community and belonging.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have knowledge of the subject matter in a global light (i.e. outside of a U.S. or primarily Western context).</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate culturally relevant resources into course content.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronounce students’ names correctly.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student’s second+ language can affect comprehension, expression and demonstration of</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accept that online courses need more effort than face-to-face classes to create social connections between students and between instructor and student.

| AT | 0% | 4% | 16% | 20% | 60% | 4.36 | 5 | 0.889 |

Be aware of concerns around the equity of various assessment methods.

| KN | 0% | 0% | 12% | 28% | 60% | 4.48 | 5 | 0.700 |

Be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that promote access and inclusion.

| KN | 0% | 4% | 8% | 28% | 60% | 4.44 | 5 | 0.804 |

Be familiar with multiple perspectives on the course topics.

| KN | 0% | 0% | 4% | 36% | 60% | 4.56 | 5 | 0.571 |

Be familiar with resources the institution offers to international students and how students can make the best use of general academic and non-academic student support services.

| KN | 0% | 0% | 16% | 24% | 60% | 4.44 | 5 | 0.753 |

Be motivated to continually assess their teaching practices to ensure they are accommodating the needs of diverse students.

<p>| AT | 0% | 0% | 8% | 32% | 60% | 4.52 | 5 | 0.640 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|
|Exhibit a growth mindset to seek out new types of content for their course.| AT        | 0%   | 0%    | 8%    | 32%    | 60%       | 4.52      | 5       | 0.640  |
|Have humility to recognize that they do not have all the answers.     | AT        | 0%   | 0%    | 8%    | 32%    | 60%       | 4.52      | 5       | 0.640  |
|Include and/or invite multiple perspectives around course topics.      | SK        | 0%   | 0%    | 4%    | 36%    | 60%       | 4.56      | 5       | 0.571  |
|Invite students to make sense of topics starting from their own perspective, rather than all starting from the same perspective/assumption.| SK        | 0%   | 4%    | 4%    | 32%    | 60%       | 4.48      | 5       | 0.755  |
|Be patient with discussions that take more time as students navigate multiple languages. | AT        | 0%   | 0%    | 4%    | 40%    | 56%       | 4.52      | 5       | 0.574  |
|Have a friendly demeanor and an interest in getting to know students. | AT        | 0%   | 0%    | 4%    | 40%    | 56%       | 4.52      | 5       | 0.574  |
|Include media that is representative of different cultures, races and ethnicities. | SK        | 0%   | 0%    | 8%    | 36%    | 56%       | 4.48      | 5       | 0.640  |
|Allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge so that evidence of mastery does not privilege some students over others. | SK        | 0%   | 0%    | 8%    | 40%    | 52%       | 4.44      | 5       | 0.637  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>KN</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>AT</th>
<th>KN</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>AT</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be familiar with key ways online pedagogy and teaching methods differ from face-to-face pedagogy and teaching.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage students about their culture and context without &quot;putting them on the spot&quot; or asking them to speak for the country, culture or people with whom they identify.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit compassion for students who are unfamiliar with U.S. class format by adapting the course design to their needs.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have knowledge of students' unique contexts and backgrounds and contexts and how these may influence their learning online (e.g. educational; economic; cultural; social; technological; disability; etc.).</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize potential challenges associated with building trust among students from non-dominant cultures with students and instructors from dominant cultures.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have familiarity with translation engines in order to understand the pros and cons students encounter when they use them.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify key terms and 'threshold concepts' of this area of study for students.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are needed for the course and recommendations for what students can do if they lack some of these.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include multiple means of presenting content (e.g. podcasts; videos; readings; demonstrations; etc.).</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be resilient and cheerful in the face of inevitable technical glitches.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe the virtual space acutely to pick up on what is not being said as a form of non-verbal communication.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept that different learners benefit from different teaching methods.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement</td>
<td>User 1</td>
<td>User 2</td>
<td>User 3</td>
<td>User 4</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Diff</td>
<td>Raw Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be willing to seek out and learn from critiques of their online course designs.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>0.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be aware of types of practical and emotional support that students need in order to acclimate to an online course.</td>
<td>KK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize the pros and cons of a range of technological tools and how their utility can vary depending on the context, users and way in which a tool is used.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be familiar with a variety of strategies for constructing multicultural groups for online course projects or activities.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanize the online environment using appropriate technological tools (e.g. by using video to introduce the course or show how to navigate the course environment; creating a liquid syllabus; etc.).</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be willing to be available at times when students can access them, including across time zones.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption videos or</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

278
make use of captioning services.

Have vulnerability to disclose when things online are complicated.

Utilize equity rubrics that take a diverse set of students into account.

The competencies below were not retained for Round 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>64%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>3.28</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>0.722</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discern when students are working on external things (i.e. multitasking and/or not paying attention) and re-engage them.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be familiar with Open Access content and Open Source tools.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be familiar with a backward design planning framework.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flip or code-switch communication styles from Linear-Direct to Elliptical-Indirect and use High-Context or Face-Giving communication styles in order to make and maintain trust, respect and harmony.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Knowledge (KN)</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-----</td>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize a brief survey to get a sense of students and their backgrounds, situational factors and aspirations and to inform the course.</td>
<td></td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have specific knowledge of holidays or other major cultural events that students observe and that will take place during the course.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide IT troubleshooting support to students.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect students who are in similar situations (e.g. those working on the same access challenges; having similar learning strategies; living in similar time zones; etc.)</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be familiar with features and settings within the campus LMS that can be adapted for global learners (e.g. language preferences; time zones; etc.).</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have general knowledge about different countries and cultures, including geography and current events.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Above Avg</td>
<td>Avg</td>
<td>Below Avg</td>
<td>High Importance</td>
<td>High Importance Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Advocate for students' needs outside of the classroom setting.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Practice good time management in order to balance the responsibilities of &quot;around the clock&quot; facilitation with healthy boundaries around personal time.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Be adept at basic digital operations such as uploading files, editing online content and creating hyperlinks.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KN</td>
<td>Be familiar with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a flexible approach to teaching that uses multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Be accommodating to students who need additional time or assistance for assignments and assessments.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KN</td>
<td>Have knowledge of the history of power and privilege in their students' own cultural contexts.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Create peer-to-peer learning opportunities.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate the level of written and spoken language skills required to succeed in the course.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select the appropriate technology, tools and resources with consideration for what materials might be unavailable or inaccessible to students (e.g. due to cost; firewalls or bandwidth issues; etc.).</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record audio and video content.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to be a &quot;guide on the side&quot; rather than a &quot;sage on the stage&quot; or a gatekeeper of knowledge.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be attuned to the humanity of someone whom they only see in text or via digital recording.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be familiar with techniques for addressing high-stakes topics in synchronous and asynchronous environments.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be patient with the learning curve that exists for students to familiarize themselves.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.722</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Imagine the student online experience and build in resources to help them succeed (e.g. videos explaining how to use the LMS or access library materials; etc.).

Practice self-care.

Provide multiple ways for students to engage with the content.

Recognize the importance of video captions for those who rely on them to comprehend content and specialized vocabulary.

Be familiar with research-based strategies to create a welcoming and inclusive online course environment.

Be open to how students engage with material, since they may not engage with the material the way the instructor anticipated.

Make the Hidden Curriculum visible so that students are able...
to see the values and norms guiding the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KN</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>12%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>44%</th>
<th>4.24</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>0.814</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be familiar with the differences between a student-centered approach and a content-centered approach to instruction.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize ways that academic neocolonialism and imperialism are embedded in US academic structures.</td>
<td>KN</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model that there is no right or wrong in discussing differing thoughts and opinions.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embrace the concept of a course as an engagement-experiential environment rather than a delivery vehicle.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffold and chunk instruction to incrementally build on students' prior learning and intersperse activities that allow students to frequently discuss, analyze and reflect.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a variety of ways to check for student comprehension</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
throughout the class sessions.

<p>| Address issues around accessibility proactively. | SK | 0% | 0% | 8% | 44% | 48% | 4.4 | 5 | 0.632 |
| Be willing to take risks in areas where they may not be successful at first and see these as growth opportunities rather than failure. | AT | 0% | 0% | 8% | 44% | 48% | 4.4 | 5 | 0.632 |
| Have a positive mindset towards online teaching and learning. | AT | 0% | 4% | 8% | 48% | 40% | 4.24 | 4 | 0.763 |
| Create opportunities for students to intentionally and explicitly connect their daily work to larger academic and life goals. | SK | 0% | 4% | 8% | 40% | 48% | 4.32 | 5 | 0.786 |
| Be familiar with a variety of frameworks for understanding cultural dimensions and differences. | KN | 0% | 4% | 4% | 48% | 44% | 4.32 | 4 | 0.733 |
| Design and organize the online environment and material so that it is intuitive and easy to navigate. | SK | 0% | 4% | 4% | 44% | 48% | 4.36 | 5 | 0.742 |
| Structure activities and exercises so that students are able to share their expertise, experiences and | SK | 0% | 4% | 4% | 44% | 48% | 4.36 | 5 | 0.742 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>44%</th>
<th>44%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant resources.</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the desire to learn from and with students.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide clear structure, guidelines and expectations for assignments,</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group work and assessments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain content in a simple and understandable way.</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.843</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX J

### NVIVO CODES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACILITATION KNOWLEDGE ITEMS</th>
<th>FACILITATION ATTITUDE ITEMS</th>
<th>FACILITATION SKILLS ITEMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FK student sharing</td>
<td>FA accessible</td>
<td>FS connect learning to goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK expectations</td>
<td>FA advocacy</td>
<td>FS discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK connect content</td>
<td>FA asset-mindedness</td>
<td>FS engage learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK institutional support for international students</td>
<td>FA bias</td>
<td>FS group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK work life balance</td>
<td>FA care</td>
<td>FS peer to peer connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK self-awareness</td>
<td>FA comfort zone</td>
<td>FS active listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK cultural</td>
<td>FA communication</td>
<td>FS communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge_specific</td>
<td>FA compassion</td>
<td>FS emotional intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK cultural</td>
<td>FA creativity</td>
<td>FS language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge_general</td>
<td>FA cultural humility</td>
<td>FS listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK country knowledge</td>
<td>FA curiosity</td>
<td>FS self-care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK build community</td>
<td>FA diverse methods</td>
<td>FS shifting frame or reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK communication</td>
<td>FA empathy</td>
<td>FS verbal and nonverbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK conflict management</td>
<td>FA exploration</td>
<td>FS approachable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK culture and relationships</td>
<td>FA flexibility</td>
<td>FS bridge difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK inclusive language</td>
<td>FA global perspective</td>
<td>FS care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK listening skills</td>
<td>FA growth mindset</td>
<td>FS community building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK model inclusivity</td>
<td>FA inclusiveness</td>
<td>FS mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK learner background</td>
<td>FA instructor presence</td>
<td>FS personable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK learner needs</td>
<td>FA learner centered</td>
<td>FS read students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK critical perspective</td>
<td>FA multiple perspectives</td>
<td>FS sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK culturally responsive teaching</td>
<td>FA non-judgemental</td>
<td>FS adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK culture and learning</td>
<td>FA openness</td>
<td>FS anti-racist pedagogies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK discussion facilitation</td>
<td>FA patience</td>
<td>FS assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK diverse methods</td>
<td>FA positive attitude</td>
<td>FS chunking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK group work</td>
<td>FA quality focus</td>
<td>FS culturally responsive teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK language and learning</td>
<td>FA reflection</td>
<td>FS detail oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK learning styles &amp; types</td>
<td>FA relationships</td>
<td>FS explain material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK online pedagogy</td>
<td>FA respect</td>
<td>FS facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FK research-based online methods</td>
<td>FA see humanity</td>
<td>FS flexibility</td>
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<td>FA self-awareness</td>
<td>FS instruction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FA understanding of cultural difference</td>
<td>FS learner centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIGN KNOWLEDGE ITEMS</td>
<td>DESIGN ATTITUDE ITEMS</td>
<td>DESIGN SKILL ITEMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>DK address multitasking and lack of attention</td>
<td>DA accessible</td>
<td>DS accessibility</td>
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<td>DK anti-racism</td>
<td>DA advocacy</td>
<td>DS active listening</td>
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<td>DK clarity of language and avoidance of jargon</td>
<td>DA appreciation or asset-mindedness</td>
<td>DS adaptability</td>
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<td>DK connect prior learning</td>
<td>DA broad scope</td>
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<td>DA build relationships</td>
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<td>DS audio video creation</td>
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<td>DK critical perspective</td>
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<td>DS build community</td>
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<td>DA commitment to online teaching</td>
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<td>DA compassion</td>
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<td>DA cultural humility</td>
<td>DS connect content to larger goals and life</td>
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<td>DK cultural knowledge specific</td>
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<td>DK culture and academics</td>
<td>DA flexibility</td>
<td>DS cultural or intercultural competence</td>
</tr>
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<td>DA friendly and approachable</td>
<td>DS curriculum design</td>
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<td>DK culture and relationships</td>
<td>DA global emphasis</td>
<td>DS digital literacy</td>
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<td>DK culture and teaching and learning</td>
<td>DA global or multiple perspectives</td>
<td>DS emotional intelligence</td>
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<td>DK current global events</td>
<td>DA growth mindset</td>
<td>DS empathy skills</td>
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<td>DA include diverse viewpoints</td>
<td>DS equitable assessment</td>
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<td>DK diversity</td>
<td>DA inclusion</td>
<td>DS hidden curriculum</td>
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FK technology and learning
FK technology skills
FK UDL

FA vulnerability
FA warmth
FA welcoming presence

FS listening for understanding
FS moderating
FS present simply
FS scaffolding
FS technology
FS time management
FS transparency
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DK engaging content</th>
<th>DA offer support</th>
<th>DS interpersonal competence</th>
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<td>DS media and resource</td>
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<td>curation</td>
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<td>DK online organization and clarity</td>
<td>DA welcoming</td>
<td>DS read the room</td>
</tr>
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<td>DK online pedagogy</td>
<td>DA open access tools</td>
<td>DS same skills as for non</td>
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<td>DK online teaching experience</td>
<td>DA pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td>DK open access tools</td>
<td>DA perspective taking</td>
<td>DS scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK pedagogy</td>
<td>DA multiple means of representation</td>
<td>DS seek out technical support</td>
</tr>
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<td>DK pronounce names correctly</td>
<td>DA problem solving</td>
<td>DS self-care skills</td>
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<td>DK respect</td>
<td>DA quality focus</td>
<td>DS technical or technology</td>
</tr>
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<td>DK structuring</td>
<td>DA resilience</td>
<td>skills</td>
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<td>DK student backgrounds</td>
<td>DA respect</td>
<td>DS translation engines</td>
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<td>DK student challenges</td>
<td>DA responsibility</td>
<td>DS understand what is not</td>
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<tr>
<td>DK student context</td>
<td>DA social connection</td>
<td>being said</td>
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<td>DK student demographics</td>
<td>DA student-centered</td>
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<tr>
<td>DK student needs</td>
<td>approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK technology or technical knowledge</td>
<td>DA understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK time zones</td>
<td>DA welcoming</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DK UDL</td>
<td>DA open access tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK writing skills</td>
<td>DA pedagogy</td>
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DA offer support
DA openness
DA patience
DA positive attitude
DA problem solving
DA quality focus
DA resilience
DA respect
DA responsibility
DA social connection
DA student-centered approach
DA understanding
DA welcoming

DS interpersonal competence
DS language and learning
DS media and resource curation
DS multiple means of representation
DS multiple perspectives
DS patience
DS pedagogy
DS perspective taking
DS predict challenges
DS problem solving skills
DS provide options
DS read the room
DS same skills as for non global audiences
DS scaffolding
DS seek out technical support
DS self-care skills
DS technical or technology skills
DS translation engines
DS understand what is not being said
APPENDIX K

52 FINAL COMPETENCIES LIST

Instructor competencies that promote cultural inclusion for international students:

**Attitudes**

1. Have cultural humility to acknowledge that your course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.

2. Have cultural humility to acknowledge that your teaching methodology is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.

3. Believe that student diversity enriches the learning space.

4. Exhibit openness, curiosity and empathy, which are facets of intercultural competence.

5. Be motivated to continually assess your teaching practices to ensure you are accommodating the needs of diverse students.

6. Exhibit enthusiasm for diverse global perspectives about course topics.

7. Exhibit compassion for students who are unfamiliar with U.S. class format by adapting the course design to their needs.

8. Be patient with discussions that take more time as students navigate multiple languages.

9. *(tied with 10)* Accept that different learners benefit from different teaching methods.

10. *(tied with 9)* Have a friendly demeanor and an interest in getting to know students.

11. Exhibit a growth mindset to seek out new types of content for your course.

12. Accept that online courses need more effort than face-to-face classes to create social connections between students and between instructor and student.

13. Have humility to recognize that you do not have all the answers.
14. Be willing to be available at times when students can access you, including across time zones.

15. Be willing to seek out and learn from critiques of your online course designs.

16. *(tied with 17)* Be resilient and cheerful in the face of inevitable technical glitches.

17. *(tied with 16)* Have vulnerability to disclose when things online are complicated.

**Skills**

1. *(tied with 2)* Demonstrate intercultural competence (i.e. the ability to function effectively across cultures; to think and act appropriately; and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds).

2. *(tied with 1)* Avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups.

3. Interrogate your pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others.

4. Address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions in class interactions early and often.

5. Integrate culturally relevant resources into course content.

6. Include and/or invite multiple perspectives around course topics.

7. Facilitate opportunities for students to connect with the instructor and each other to develop a sense of trust, community and belonging.

8. *(tied with 9)* Create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching the instructor for help or with questions.

9. *(tied with 8)* Pronounce students' names correctly.

10. Include media that is representative of different cultures, races and ethnicities.

11. Engage students about their cultures and contexts without "putting them on the spot" or asking them to speak for the country, cultures or groups with whom they identify.

12. Allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge so that evidence of mastery does not privilege some students over others.
13. Invite students to make sense of topics starting from their own perspective, rather than all starting from the same perspective/assumption.

14. Utilize equity rubrics that take a diverse set of students into account.

15. Humanize the online environment using appropriate technological tools (e.g. by using video to introduce the course or show how to navigate the course environment; creating a liquid syllabus; etc.).

16. Observe the virtual space acutely to pick up on what is not being said as a form of non-verbal communication.

17. Include multiple means of presenting content (e.g. podcasts; videos; readings; demonstrations; etc.).

18. Caption videos or make use of captioning services.

19. Identify key terms and 'threshold concepts' of this area of study for students.

20. Articulate the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are needed for the course and recommendations for what students can do if they lack some of these.

**Knowledge**

1. Recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure.

2. Be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that promote access and inclusion.

3. Recognize cultural assumptions and biases that underlie the course discipline and topics.

4. Have knowledge of students' unique contexts and backgrounds and how these may influence their learning online (e.g. educational; economic; cultural; social; technological; disability; etc.).

5. Recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student's second+ language can affect comprehension, expression and demonstration of learning.

6. Recognize potential challenges associated with building trust among students from non-dominant cultures with students and instructors from dominant cultures.
7. Know about the subject matter in a global light (i.e. outside of a U.S. or primarily Western context).

8. Be aware of concerns around the equity of various assessment methods.

9. Be familiar with resources the institution offers to international students and how students can make the best use of general academic and non-academic student support services.

10. Be familiar with multiple perspectives on the course topics.

11. Be familiar with a variety of strategies for constructing multicultural groups for online course projects or activities.

12. Be aware of types of practical and emotional support that students need in order to acclimate to an online course.

13. Recognize the pros and cons of a range of technological tools and how their utility can vary depending on the context, users and way in which a tool is used.

14. Be familiar with key ways online pedagogy and teaching methods differ from face-to-face pedagogy and teaching.

15. Be familiar with translation engines in order to understand the pros and cons students encounter when they use them.
## APPENDIX L

### Q-SORT RANKINGS

*Knowledge Competencies Ranked from Most to Less Essential*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Competency Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Recognize that there are culturally rooted ways of teaching and learning that can shape behaviors in areas such as communication; relationships; participation style; group work as well as issues of self-awareness and self-disclosure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Be familiar with anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogies that promote access and inclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Recognize cultural assumptions and biases that underlie the course discipline and topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Have knowledge of students' unique backgrounds and contexts and how these may influence their learning online (e.g. educational; economic; cultural; social; technological; disability; etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Recognize the impact of language on student success and that work in a student's second+ language can affect comprehension, expression and demonstration of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Recognize potential challenges associated with building trust among students from non-dominant cultures with students and instructors from dominant cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Have knowledge of the subject matter in a global light (i.e. outside of a U.S. or primarily Western context).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Be aware of concerns around the equity of various assessment methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Be familiar with resources the institution offers to international students and how students can make the best use of general academic and non-academic student support services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Be familiar with multiple perspectives on the course topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Be familiar with a variety of strategies for constructing multicultural groups for online course projects or activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Be aware of types of practical and emotional support that students need in order to acclimate to an online course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13) 42 Recognize the pros and cons of a range of technological tools and how their utility can vary depending on the context, users and way in which a tool is used.

14) 33 Be familiar with key ways online pedagogy and teaching methods differ from face-to-face pedagogy and teaching.

15) 32 Have familiarity with translation engines in order to understand the pros and cons students encounter when they use them.

### Attitude Competencies Ranked from Most to Less Essential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Competency Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Have cultural humility to acknowledge that their course content is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Cultural humility to acknowledge that their teaching methodology is based on culturally-informed values and ways of knowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Believe that student diversity enriches the learning space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Exhibit openness, curiosity and empathy, which are facets of intercultural competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Be motivated to continually assess their teaching practices to ensure they are accommodating the needs of diverse students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Exhibit enthusiasm for diverse global perspectives about course topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Exhibit compassion for students who are unfamiliar with U.S. class format by adapting the course design to their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Be patient with discussions that take more time as students navigate multiple languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>55 (tied)</td>
<td>Have a friendly demeanor and an interest in getting to know students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>55 (tied)</td>
<td>Accept that different learners benefit from different teaching methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Exhibit a growth mindset to seek out new types of content for their course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Accept that online courses need more effort than face-to-face classes to create social connections between students and between instructor and student.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12) 48 Have humility to recognize that they do not have all the answers.
13) 47 Be willing to be available at times when students can access them, including across time zones.
14) 45 Be willing to seek out and learn from critiques of their online course designs.
15) 34 (tied) Be resilient and cheerful in the face of inevitable technical glitches.
15) 34 (tied) Have vulnerability to disclose when things online are complicated.

**Skill Competencies Ranked from Most to Less Essential**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Competency Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>92 (tied)</td>
<td>Avoid language and concepts that might marginalize or stereotype individuals or groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>92 (tied)</td>
<td>Demonstrate intercultural competence (i.e. the ability to function effectively across cultures; to think and act appropriately; and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Interrogate their pedagogy for areas of exclusion, racism, xenophobia and bias that may privilege the knowledge and behaviors of some students over others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Address assumptions, biases, misconceptions, misunderstandings and microaggressions in class interactions early and often.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Integrate culturally relevant resources into course content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Include and/or invite multiple perspectives around course topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Facilitate opportunities for students to connect with the instructor and each other to develop a sense of trust, community and belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7)</td>
<td>77 (tied)</td>
<td>Create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching the instructor for help or with questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8)</td>
<td>77 (tied)</td>
<td>Pronounce students' names correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Include media that is representative of different cultures, races and ethnicities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10) Engage students about their culture and context without "putting them on the spot" or asking them to speak for the country, culture or people with whom they identify.

11) Allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge so that evidence of mastery does not privilege some students over others.

12) Invite students to make sense of topics starting from their own perspective, rather than all starting from the same perspective/assumption.

13) Utilize equity rubrics that take a diverse set of students into account.

14) Humanize the online environment using appropriate technological tools (e.g. by using video to introduce the course or show how to navigate the course environment; creating a liquid syllabus; etc.).

15) Observe the virtual space acutely to pick up on what is not being said as a form of non-verbal communication.

16) Include multiple means of presenting content (e.g. podcasts; videos; readings; demonstrations; etc.).

17) Caption videos or make use of captioning services.

18) Identify key terms and 'threshold concepts' of this area of study for students.

19) Articulate the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are needed for the course and recommendations for what students can do if they lack some of these.


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