

Develop Intercultural Relationships

Part of getting the most out of your time at university is making connections with people and interacting with students from different cultural and language backgrounds. By implementing the strategies on this Learning Aid, you will be prepared to develop diverse connections and friendships at KPU that will support you in your academic and interpersonal growth as a student and into your career.

“In our course it is always good to get a different point of view. Everyone has so many different ideas ... Getting opinions and listening to people talk and think...helps me to develop my own ideas.” (KPU student)

“Interaction with international students does help with learning. It helps that when you go to a workplace there will be other cultures there and it will help you communicate better because you have that experience. You learn to explain things in a way that everyone else understands as well.” (KPU student)

Why is this important?

Three top reasons:

- 1. To feel connected:** We know from research that students today spend less time on campus than they did in the past. Increased numbers of university students spend less time on campus. They are less likely to be involved in activities around campus and seem to keep more to themselves at university. Therefore, it would seem that the classroom is an important place to make connections with fellow students, using your studies as a common reference point for discussions.
- 2. For learning:** Students have different educational experiences that inform their view of the material that is being taught. Through discussion with fellow students, you can discover the extent to which your perceptions, assumptions and general understandings differ from those of your peers. This enhances your own knowledge and thinking processes, which supports learning.
- 3. For developing skills** Employers want graduates who can communicate effectively with people from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. There are many opportunities for you to develop these skills at university.

What can I do?

Here are a few suggestions:

- Try to move outside your own cultural and language group in classes.
- When forming groups to discuss work, try to include students who may offer different perspectives based on their diverse cultural/language background.
- Respect the views of other students and listen to what they have to say before offering an alternative view.
- Ask for clarification, if you are unsure of the points that have been made.
- Reflect on the value of interacting with diverse students for your own learning.

References: Adapted from: Arkoudis, S., Yu, X., Baik, C., Borland, H., Chang, S., Lang, I., ... Watty, K. (2010). *Finding common ground: enhancing interaction between domestic and international students*. Australian Teaching and Learning Council. Retrieved from http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/projectsites/enhancing_interact.html