



COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE: DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN EUROPE: A SOFT SKILLS PERSPECTIVE

COURSE INFORMATION

Programme	Empowering Community Engagement: Soft Skills Micro-Courses for Students and Staff
University	Comillas Pontifical University
Department	Education, Research Methods and Assessment
Course name	Diversity, inclusion and peaceful coexistence in Europe: A soft skills perspective
Course code	ECE1.3
Credits/hours	3 hours
Language of instruction	English
Course dates	On demand, flexible access
Course schedule	Asynchronous online
Course coordinator	Birgit Strotmann
Course instructor	María Mercedes Zurdo Garay-Gordovil
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SHORT DESCRIPTION

The university, as a social institution, both reflects and shapes society: it responds to historical contexts and social needs, transmits values, and engages with the challenges of its time. Yet its role goes beyond reproducing existing realities. Through its core mission—educating professionals, advancing knowledge, and fostering ethics and culture — the university is also called to act as an agent of social transformation. In this sense, it contributes to economic and social development through education, research, and outreach.

At the same time, because the university is embedded in society, it must understand its work as a process of collaborative and active co-creation with the wider range of social actors. Knowledge is not neutral; it always reflects values and a particular conception of the human person (P. Kolvenbach, S.J.). At Comillas Pontifical University, this commitment to transformation translates into the formation of conscious, competent, committed, and compassionate persons — professionals who strive to build a more humane world. This includes recognising differences as an asset and promoting dialogue as a foundation for peaceful coexistence.

It is within this framework that the training project presented below is situated. Its central objective is community engagement, understood as a conscious social commitment that leads us beyond the academic sphere and into the wider community, with a compassionate outlook and a willingness to place our competences at the service of others.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SOFT SKILLS

General Objectives:

1. Understand the broad concept of diversity (physical, functional, cognitive, cultural, linguistic-communicative).
 2. Identify unconscious biases and barriers to inclusion.
 3. Develop empathetic attitudes and welcoming communication skills.
 4. Raise awareness of the signs and strategies that embrace and promote diversity and inclusion in professional, academic and other social contexts.
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Soft skills to be developed:

Category	Description	Task
Empathy	Feeling with someone by understanding his experience as a basis for recognising and valuing diversity.	Reflection and case analysis.
Inclusive / WELCOMING Communication	Using non-discriminatory language, adapting message to the audience and using verbal and non-verbal language to create connection and promote an inclusive environment.	Mini communication challenge.
Critical Thinking	Questioning stereotypes and personal biases. Identifying barriers to accessibility and inclusion.	Reflective self-assessment.
Self-Reflection	Assessing attitudes and identifying improvement actions.	Self-evaluation rubric.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the concept of diversity and its implications for professional and community-based practice.
- Recognise and interpret others' emotions as a foundation for empathy.
- Apply inclusive and welcoming communication strategies in interpersonal and group settings.
- Identify and critically examine stereotypes, personal biases, and barriers to inclusion in oneself and in the surrounding environment.
- Reflect on their personal commitment to inclusion and formulate concrete actions to strengthen it.

COURSE CONTENTS

1. **Diversity in context:** Understanding diversity as a key dimension of contemporary social realities.
 2. **Bias and prejudice:** Recognising personal assumptions and stereotypes as a first step to-
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wards inclusion.

3. **Empathic and inclusive communication:** Developing welcoming interaction strategies in diverse settings.
4. **Accessibility and inclusion:** Identifying barriers and enabling participation for all.
5. **Inclusive action:** Designing practical steps to promote a more inclusive society.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

This is an online asynchronous course. The methodological approach is a scenario-based microlearning framework, that guides through a structured learning pathway composed of short, self-contained instructional units. Each step integrates reflective practice and decision-making activities within an immersive narrative scenario. The approach combines principles from microlearning design, experiential learning and self-regulated learning. Learners progress through a sequenced scenario itinerary where each micro-module includes:

- Contextualized scenario prompts.
- Micro-tasks and bite-sized learning assets.
- Reflective checkpoints for metacognitive engagement.
- Performance feedback loops which may increase motivation/interest.

The methodology is based on cognitive scaffolding, active knowledge construction, and iterative reflection, supporting learners in internalising both key concepts and inclusive attitudes. The course is delivered through five short modules that combine microlearning units with guided reflective activities. Digital tools that may support delivery and engagement may include Moodle, Genially, H5P, Canva, Powtoon, Quizizz, and Blooket.

Student working hours:

Module	Topic	Activity	Duration
1	Diversity from a broad point of view	Video story (+ reading as optional)	30 min
2	Recognizing bias and prejudices	Self-test with immediate feedback.	30 min
3	Empathetic and inclusive/welcoming communication	Infographic (+ other optional resources).	40 min



	cation.	Gamified quiz with images to identify empathetic and welcoming communication.	
4	Accessibility and inclusion	Short text with basic concepts and visual examples about accessibility and integrated checklist for understanding assessment.	30 min
5	Actions for a more inclusive/accessible society	Upload photo of an element for inclusion/accessibility and a 50-100 words comment. The participant receives a model as feedback, followed by a short self-assessment.	50 min

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The evaluation design is grounded in a formative approach, where assessment is conceived primarily as a learning strategy rather than a grading instrument. Timely and accurate feedback is therefore treated as a key element in supporting motivation and sustained engagement.

From a quantitative perspective, participants are considered to have successfully completed the course once they have completed all microlearning activities included in the learning pathway. In addition, participants receive immediate feedback after each scale, questionnaire, or checklist.

The course also includes a short self-assessment activity, in which participants upload a photo and write a brief reflective comment.

STUDENT WORKLOAD (in hours)

Contact hours	Autonomous work	Overall
0	3	3

READING LIST / RELEVANT REFERENCES



- Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. Longman.
- Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: Cognitive domain*.
- David McKay Company. European University Association. (2019). *Diversity, equity and inclusion in European higher education institutions: Results from the INVITED project* (A.-L. Claeys-Kulik, T. Ekman Jørgensen & H. Stöber, eds.; J. Royo & H. Mariaud, junta editorial). European University Association. https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/web_diversity%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20in%20european%20higher%20education%20institutions.pdf eua.eu+1
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- Galdames-Calderón, M., Stavnskær Pedersen, A., & Rodríguez-Gómez, D. (2024). Systematic review: Revisiting challenge-based learning teaching practices in higher education. *Education Sciences*, 14(9), 1008. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14091008> MDPI+2OUCI+2
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- Sokolova, H. (2025). Cultural inclusivity of higher education in the EU: Are we ready to welcome a more diverse Europe? *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 19(1), 2409–2421. <https://doi.org/10.2478/picbe-2025-0186> Paradigm+1

