

The forgotten stage of designing curricula

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When academics are faced with the task of designing a module, course, or programme, they often begin by considering the overarching learning outcomes. From this, the content is selected, activities constructed, and assessments designed so that each stage is constructively aligned. When deciding upon required and recommended reading lists, the typical questions which can be used to represent this process often include: *what* needs to be learnt? *who* are the leading authors in the field that students need to know of? *When* were the most recent relevant texts published? The latter emphasises the importance of currency and up to date knowledge when selecting sources. These questions make for reading lists that are made up from rather superficial choices. There thus seems to be a forgotten stage of critical questioning which should be considered beforehand. This stage is one that explores the deeper levels of learning which students will hopefully achieve, reflection by the academic themselves upon the choices they make in terms of course design and selection, and engagement between academics and library staff to form a more thoughtful decolonised curricula.

Often the expertise of library staff and their knowledge of the scholarly communications market can be overlooked. In addition to analysis of the current reading list content and current library collections, libraries can search for and facilitate access to resources across a range of media formats. Collection development built around the inclusivity agenda and representative of a diverse range of opinions and perspectives to meet academic requirements is at the heart of what Libraries are for. Working together academics and librarians can engage with the selection of materials.

While strategies for internationalising curricula helpfully calls for greater inclusion of authors and texts from across the globe, decolonising curricula calls for deeper consideration of the perspectives, histories, and power dynamics behind the selections we make. We suggest that there is a forgotten stage to designing curricula and reading lists, and put forth the following set of questions to help colleagues to cohere a more decolonised curricula.

1. *Why* do you want your students to learn about this subject?
2. What do you envision is/are the possible *social change(s)* may come from this course?
3. What are the *different perspectives* that can be included in your reading list?
4. What are the leading arguments concerning this topic? Are they the only ones which students should be considering?
5. What are the range of *contexts* which should be considered?
6. What *type of sources* are you offering your students in their reading lists? Is there a range?
7. What types of *questions* do you want your students to ask about this subject? Why?

8. What *role can the Library play* in supporting academics in this forgotten stage of designing a decolonised curricula?

The above questions can help to tease out greater levels of critical reflection and encourage discussion of the reasons behind the decisions we are making regarding content selection. Individuals or groups of colleagues can use these questions as part of a brainstorming activity during the early stages of planning. The more voices involved in these discussions, the better. The inclusion of student voices is also highly important. These questions can be used to kick start discussion and will likely lead to a number of other questions which can help to extend discussions further.

Dr Danielle Tran, Senior Lecturer in Learning, Teaching, and Professional Development
University of Greenwich
Joanne Dunham, Associate Director: Resources and Information at the University of
Leicester