

Specific examples – An issue involving Muslim students and culture

A particular problem that was encountered and has been overcome concerns a cohort of male and female Muslim masters level students. One of the requirements for the course they were enrolled on is to be able to engage in a critical manner. For the female cohorts this created a cultural barrier as they could not engage in a critical manner with the male students. For the university this initially posed a dilemma, in thinking about how best to teach these students. As an institution we had to consider that if we tried to impose the western model on to them we would be disregarding their cultural beliefs, but, if we did not teach them how to engage in a critical manner we could potentially be setting them up to fail the course. This meant we had to provide a solution where neither of these events occurred. Our solution was to separate the female students out at certain points to enable them to engage in a critical manner amongst each other. All of the students completed critical written responses and presented their ideas as a group, allowing them all to dip in and out as needed. In this way we were able to give them the tools to gently move them towards public engagement without compromising their cultural beliefs.