Training and Facilitation Guidelines

The legislation for HB7 makes it clear that issues of race, color, national origin, or sex can be taught or discussed in a training context but must be discussed in an objective manner.

Below are specific guidelines to create an atmosphere that fosters objectivity and avoids “endorsement” by promoting open and genuine engagement with a range of perspectives, including views that differ from those presented.

Following these guidelines can help trainers and facilitators cover difficult concepts—even those explicitly noted in HB7—and remain within the legislation’s guidelines.

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Set the Stage

Clarify intent up front

Clarify at the start of the session that concepts in the session are presented to deepen participants’ understanding and/or improve skills. Inform participants that they can (and should) assess the value of the concepts and no one should feel compelled to believe any idea simply because it is presented in the training.

The goal is for participants to be well-informed and to make their own better decisions rather than to simply adopt what the presenter says.

*Note:* Some instructors may choose to include specific reference to HB7, acknowledging that in alignment with it, their intention is to make sure that all participants feel free to arrive at their own conclusions. In doing so, all can benefit from respectfully sharing their perspective and listening to others’ perspectives.
Create norms/ground rules/community agreements that reinforce openness to a range of perspectives, mutual respect, shared intention to learn from one another, etc.

Ground rules should not only be stated but agreed upon and referenced throughout the conversation.

Consider having one of the norms explicitly reference the importance of encouraging, valuing and respecting different perspectives—in alignment with the UF Core Values of Community and Freedom & Civility.

Helpful norms used by instructors and facilitators at UF have included:

- Speak your “truth” in way that respects other people’s “truth” (for example, “My experience has been different, and I see the situation in this way.”)
- Respond to others with honest, open questions
- If you disagree with others, turn to curiosity or wonder (for example, ask yourself “I wonder what brought her to this conclusion?”)
- Suspend judgment and ask for clarification to deepen understanding of others’ perspectives/experiences.
- Actively listen: seek to understand, not to respond. Resist the temptation by giving 100% focus to the speaker.
- We are here to learn from each other. There is no one holder of knowledge but holders of lived experiences.
Take a facilitative approach

Present ideas and then create opportunities for participants to consider the ideas and other participants’ perspectives to deepen learning. The focus is on participants gaining their own understanding through reflection and dialogue.

- **Before** presenting a concept, clarify intent to present the concept and then have people consider its usefulness, truth, helpfulness, etc.
- **After** presenting a concept, create space for people to reflect and/or discuss the validity, helpfulness, value, etc., of the concepts.
- Ask for other perspectives (for example, “How do you see it?” “Who thinks differently about this idea?”) Note that it is OK if others’ perspectives are different than what has been presented.
- Allow for silence and even encourage or protect a pause for reflection as needed.
- Use paired discussion or small group discussion to promote the sharing of each person’s perspectives. Also, if difficult topics are to be covered, consider giving people a chance to get to know each other in some way before covering challenging content.
- Rather than just presenting concepts, use case studies and allow participants to discuss in small groups as a way of increasing understanding of concepts and sharing of perspectives.

Reflect beforehand

Know your own beliefs, conclusions, and triggers and how those might be challenged during the conversation. Reflecting in advance can help maintain the focus on facilitating others’ discussions, growth, learning, and exploration rather than defending or asserting one’s own perspective.

Consider having a script that allows you to respond in a safe and helpful way in anticipated difficult areas. Have a plan in the event the discussion goes in a negative direction and needs to be course corrected.

For some conversations, it may be helpful to facilitate in pairs. Co-facilitators can support one another in maintaining openness to participants perspectives even around difficult topics.