

IMPLEMENTING GLOBAL LEARNING AS A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMATION AND INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A South African Framework

Summary prepared by The Unit for Global Learning, Stellenbosch University International (2024)

Overview

This framework updates Stellenbosch University International's (SUI) 2019 Global Learning (GL) approach to align with shifts in internationalisation theory and practice, local and regional contexts, and a post-COVID higher education landscape. It centres Global Learning as a transformative, inclusive and contextually relevant process, embedding it into institutional strategies and programmes across teaching, research, and engagement.

The Evolving Landscape of Internationalisation

Internationalisation has traditionally followed Global North paradigms, often overlooking local and indigenous contexts. SUI's revised definition of internationalisation is "informed by responsible, sustainable and digital international higher education", moving beyond structural exposure to cultivate critical, reciprocal and transformative engagement. The framework responds to critiques of internationalisation as Eurocentric by incorporating Global South epistemologies and pluriversal perspectives.

The Unit for Global Learning (UGL)

Established in 2024, the UGL consolidates global learning programmes across formal curricula, co-curricular spaces, and staff/student capacity-building. It provides cross-institutional support to foster meaningful intercultural development.

2024 Updated Global Learning Outcomes

SUI's Global Learning Outcomes (GLOs) guide programme design, assessment, and institutional alignment. Students and staff will:

1. **Gain increased knowledge** about how global issues affect diverse local contexts.
2. **Critically reflect** on their own cultural, social, and educational frames of reference to understand how their perspective informs and limits their knowledge.
3. **Demonstrate respect for diversity** by adopting pluriversal perspectives on complex issues.
4. **Understand the impact** of their actions on communities locally and globally.
5. **Demonstrate a transformative, post-colonial and values-based approach** to creating positive change.
6. **Develop professional skills and competences** in intercultural settings.
7. **Continuously develop and apply global learning** across multiple contexts

Foundational Theories and Approaches

Drawing from critical literature and national policy, the framework champions:

- **Pluriversality:** Embracing multiple worldviews and ways of knowing (Escobar, Ndlovu-Gatsheni).
- **Criticality and Positionality:** Encouraging reflection on power, privilege, and identity.
- **Social Justice and Transformation:** Shaping global citizenship rooted in local realities.
- **Critical Diversity Literacies** (Melissa Steyn): Developing competencies for navigating a post-apartheid, post-colonial society.
- **Decolonial Pedagogy:** Grounding learning in mutuality, reciprocity, and sustainability.

Conclusion

Global Learning at Stellenbosch University is redefined as a contextualised, intentional and transformative tool that not only equips students and staff with global competencies, but also enhances their capacity to engage ethically and effectively with complex local and international realities. By rooting this work in African and South African frameworks, the university contributes to a more equitable and multiperspectival global higher education landscape.