

Culturally Inclusive Participation in Sport

A culturally inclusive university is one where staff and students actively engage with one another, where similarities and differences are explored and valued, and where staff and students interact and learn through alternate cultures. For information on La Trobe University initiatives in this area, see the Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice (CDIP) webpage: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cdip>

Participation in sport is an important part of university life. It is the responsibility of university clubs, associations and individuals who are involved in planning sporting events (whether they be social or competition) to aim for the range of activities to be relevant and appropriate for the diverse university community. Providing culturally inclusive sporting events and opportunities for participation in sport encourages staff and students to take part and helps them to develop contacts, make friends and enhance communication skills.

A website called 'Play by the Rules' is a useful resource offering guidelines on discrimination in sport, frequently asked questions, training courses, policies, networking opportunities and relevant links to further web resources. Supported by the Australian Federal, State and Territory Governments, and endorsed by the Australian Sports Commission, it is available at: <http://www.playbytherules.net.au>

Benefits of Participation in Sport for Individuals

Many individuals are under great pressure to perform well academically and/or professionally and are hesitant about participating in any activity that they see as unrelated to their work. Frequently, sport is seen as a distraction from work and/or study and a 'frivolous activity'. Individuals are often unaware of the direct academic, professional and social advantages of participation in leisure and recreation activities.

"The skills learnt from socialising with Australian and other international students were a key factor in my employment success. These skills include introducing myself, listening, asking questions, maintaining

a conversation and discussing contentious topics with someone with a different cultural perspective. Another important aspect of socialising is the network of friends and contacts one establishes on a worldwide scale" (Anonymous student).

For participants, increased involvement in sport can lead directly to improved physical and mental health. Participation also helps people to create and maintain wider social networks, which provide balance to a hectic work and/or study program. Such balance is important, as it is easy for busy individuals to become socially isolated by concentrating only on one area. A balanced lifestyle including physical activity can result in better concentration while studying and better success rates, and can lead overall to lower social, physical and mental health problems within the university community.

See General Information Folio 4 'Understanding and Supporting People Experiencing Culture Shock' <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cdip> for further information.

Benefits of Participation in Sport for Clubs

Higher rates of participation lead to increased club membership and a greater range of sports being played. Clubs also benefit from a broader understanding of various cultures as well as an increase in the number of skilled players, volunteers and administrators.

For further information on the barriers to, and the benefits of, participation in sport, refer to the policies section of the Australian Government's sports website: <http://www.ausport.gov.au/policies/sportforall.asp>

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TIPS

Provision of Sporting Facilities

The diversity of the La Trobe University community is reflected in a demand for a wide range of sporting activities. Opportunities exist for sporting associations and clubs to expand their services by encouraging people of diverse cultures to create clubs based on inclusiveness. Sporting associations could seek to ascertain (perhaps by survey) the preferences of all La Trobe staff and students on what types of sports they would be interested in. Inclusiveness can be promoted by offering sports such as badminton, jai alai, table tennis, American football and so on.

Additionally, there are opportunities for associations to enhance their inclusive practices for women, such as, offering 'women's only' sessions for particular sports and for particular gym sessions. Such initiatives can encourage women from particular backgrounds, who may feel restricted from participation for some of the reasons outlined in the 'barriers'.

Functions Associated with Sport

Many 'after-sport' activities on campus currently focus on the easy availability of alcohol, as well as a party atmosphere. Many students are uncomfortable with this form of entertainment and for some it is strictly against their religious beliefs and they therefore do not attend. Advertising which focuses on 'free beer, sausage sizzles and lots of fun' actively discourages attendance by some groups. Many students have negative preconceptions of student alcohol consumption habits and make a conscious decision to avoid social activities where alcohol is served.

Greater inclusiveness can be achieved by serving drinks that are popular in different countries. Examples include cooling herbal teas from China, yoghurt mixes from India and sweet syrups from Malaysia. Encouraging participants to contribute and share foods of their own choice also demonstrates inclusive practice. **See TIPS, University Community – 'Culturally Inclusive Social Events' for more information.**
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cdip>

Barriers to Participation in Sport

Social barriers

- Some religious obligations and celebrations may limit the possibilities for participation on a particular day or at a particular time.
- Financial costs associated with the activities – clubs could consider a variety of support options such as fundraising, grant opportunities and subsidising uniforms/fees.
- Access to transport can be limited – clubs could consider creating a 'buddy' system that links members who live near each other.
- Previous experiences of unfair treatment or discrimination can deter people from participating. When people feel welcome, they are more likely to continue. Discrimination is unfortunately prevalent in sport and can manifest verbally, through actions and physical abuse and by exclusion.

All university sports clubs can adopt and display equal opportunity policies, and be willing to address incidents of unfair treatment or discrimination.

- Bias of participants themselves can create problems even within diverse groupings. People who share similar cultures may unintentionally place social barriers around themselves e.g. by all wanting to be on the same team in a mixed competition. In such situations, team leaders and/or the organisers could encourage adoption of their philosophy of inclusiveness, or consider providing opportunities for people to compete in distinct groupings, as long as everyone understands and expresses their reasons for doing so.

Organisational barriers

- Clubs may not be aware of the benefits associated with increasing the cultural diversity of the membership, particularly when the club is doing well and has a strong membership base.
- Developing new networks, programs and procedures may be seen as too difficult, too expensive or too time consuming for already over-stretched volunteers/staff.
- Being unaware of the needs and practices of specific cultural groups.
- Being unaware of available support options and where to source assistance.
- Unwillingness to become culturally inclusive.

Barriers for women

These arise from both the sporting environment and from within their own cultural community. The Australian Sports Commission website offers a range of information and guidelines regarding women and sport, including 'Frequently Asked Questions' at <http://www.ausport.gov.au/women/faq.asp>

Sporting environment

- Lack of appropriate facilities e.g. showers, privacy.
- Difficulties in securing female coaches at appropriate times.
- Lack of appropriate programs.
- Some women need to participate in a female-only environment e.g. women who practise Islam.
- Dress requirements of particular sports may restrict participation e.g. for women who observe hijab – the Muslim practice of covering the head and body.

Cultural Community

The cultural, religious or gender expectations of women from various backgrounds may create restrictions to participation. These can include beliefs that women should be less physically active than men and focus more on domestic responsibilities.

Checklist for Inclusive Sport Participation

Consultation

- Consult with people who have knowledge of various cultures, including Indigenous Australians Student Services Units or International Programs Office staff. http://www.latrobe.edu.au/indigenous/student_services.html
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/international/>
- Acknowledge that La Trobe University is on Indigenous land. See **General Information Folio GIF 5: 'Culturally Inclusive Social Events'**.
- Include student representatives from a variety of cultural backgrounds in the planning and marketing, to benefit from their knowledge and networks.
- Where possible, include their advice in the planning and timing of games and competitions.
- Check the cultural calendar for events and festivities around your intended sport function – to avoid leaving particular groups out, and to ensure that diverse cultural interests are considered in the planning e.g. dates of religious festivals.

Venue

- Where possible, choose a venue with facilities that ensure comfort and accessibility for all students involved e.g. private change rooms for women and men.
- Consider holding activities on-campus.
- In large halls or sports grounds where more than one area can be used at the same time, try to avoid scheduling 'women only' team events at the same time as mixed gender or male team events on neighbouring facilities.

Marketing

- When advertising events or sports, display signs and posters that encourage cross cultural participation.
- Create a newsletter that is handed out at home games to everyone who comes through the gate. It could inform people about what is going on in the club, giving examples of positive role models within the club and what they are doing.
- Develop good-practice programs, and showcase successful examples of inclusive sporting clubs.
- Use multilingual posters.

Ground rules

- Conduct education seminars, focusing on behaviours and attitudes associated with sports, and include information about respecting culturally diverse behaviours and attitudes.
- Clearly display expectations regarding behaviours and use of facilities ('codes of conduct') e.g. hygiene requirements, food and drink rules, social interaction. For example, see: <http://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources.html>
- Where uniform or dress requirements are expected, be flexible so that cultural dress requirements can be accommodated.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to become familiar with using appropriate terminology.
For more information, see: General Information Folio 5 'Appropriate Terminology, Indigenous Australian Peoples' and 'Guidance of Naming Systems'.

Additional strategies to consider in promoting cultural diversity in sporting participation

- Create selection criteria and policies so that no-one is disadvantaged when joining a club, whether it is to play or to take up an administrative role.
- Seek further guidance on how to improve Indigenous Australian people's participation in sport, see: <http://www.ausport.gov.au/isp/cca.asp>
- Consider equity issues e.g. access for people with specific physical needs, pregnancy and sport, facilities for children, groups for various ages and levels of ability, provision of female coaches/trainers.
- Encourage equal gender representation in committees and coaching/administrative positions as well as building a culturally diverse membership.

References and Further Resources

Australian Sports Commission,
<http://www.ausport.gov.au/policies/sportforall.asp>
<http://www.ausport.gov.au/women/faq.asp>
<http://www.ausport.gov.au/isp/cca.asp> (enhancing Indigenous Australian people's participation) Accessed September 2007

Equal Opportunity Commission of SA and SA Office for Recreation and Sport <http://www.playbytherules.net.au/> Accessed September 2007

Fox, K.R. (1999). 'The influence of physical activity on mental well-being', *Public Health Nutrition*, 2(3a), pp. 411-418.

Jarvie, G. (1998). Sport and social capital in British higher education. *Sociology of Sport Online*. Retrieved August 2004, from <http://physed.otago.ac.nz/sosol/v1i1/v1i1a1.htm>

Keogh, V. (2002). *Multicultural Sport: Sustaining a Level Playing Field*. Melbourne: Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.

INDICATE: ▶ Highly Evident = **5** Somewhat Evident = **3**
Hardly Evident = **1** Not evident = **0**

Reviewing Inclusive Sports Participation

Use this exercise to help get a picture of your approach to inclusive sports participation.

What evidence do I have that my approach is effective?

To what extent do I...

Encourage people of diverse cultures to participate in the activities in which I am involved?

5 3 1 0

Promote the academic, professional and social benefits of taking part in sporting activities?

5 3 1 0

Encourage women to take part in the activities in which I am involved? 5 3 1 0

Encourage inclusive, 'after-sport' activities? 5 3 1 0

To what extent does the club...

Recognise the barriers to participation for particular groups of people? 5 3 1 0

Evaluate the strategies implemented to remove barriers to participation? 5 3 1 0

Actively promote non-mainstream sports? 5 3 1 0

Organise inclusive on-campus social events in conjunction with sports participation?

5 3 1 0