

# Ways to integrate social responsibility skills into Higher Education teaching

Our model of social responsibility focuses on four key components:

1. Multicultural competence, which involves knowledge of and sensitivity towards cultural identities.
2. Ethical competence, which focuses on knowledge of ethical standards and applying those standards to make ethical decisions.
3. Civic competence, which means being an informed and active local, national, and global citizen.
4. Environmental competence, which includes a concern for the well-being of the planet and practicing sustainability.

Social responsibility is an important skill that employers expect in their hires, and a crucial factor for developing ethical, just, and well-functioning societies. Employers agree that social responsibility should be taught to higher education students regardless of their area of study.<sup>1</sup> On a more global level, building a nation's social responsibility encourages people to be more involved in their societies and has the potential to create more caring and just communities.<sup>2,3</sup>

Below are some example learning tasks to give you inspiration for how students can develop and practice social responsibility skills in the classroom.

Subject	Component of social responsibility	Learning activity
Accounting & Finance	Ethical competence	Learners analyze and discuss a case study about an ethical dilemma that an accountant might experience in practice (e.g. an accountant is assigned to audit a company that they own stock in).
Economics	Civic competence	Learners write a research paper analyzing how the economies of two countries influence one another, paying special attention to how governmental policies shape the economies.
Engineering	Environmental competence	Learners redesign a current mechanical product or system in order to make it more energy efficient or decrease the negative impact it has on the environment.
Language teaching	Environmental competence	Learners are asked to carry out online research about forms of alternative energy. They then select one form and write a paper discussing why their government should consider converting to that source of energy.
Management	Multicultural competence	Learners research and write a report about a global company. In particular, they investigate and analyze the strategies the company uses to understand and accommodate the different cultural identities of their employees.
Marketing	Multicultural competence	Learners examine various marketing messages and campaigns. They then analyze how consumers' cultural identities along various dimensions might impact how they respond to the messages.
Maths	Ethical competence	Learners read an article about problematic uses of mathematical research (e.g. bias in artificial intelligence systems) and engage in a discussion about the ethical obligations mathematicians and other scientists have regarding the use of their research.
Science	Civic competence	Learners research effective partnerships between scientists and governmental organizations, with the goal of helping students learn how scientists can engage with and support governmental processes, like public policy.

1 Hart Research Associates. (2015). *Falling short? College learning and career success*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

2 Beane, J., Turner, J., Jones, D., & Lipka, R. (1981). *Long-term effects of community service programs*. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 11(2), 143-155.

3 Hyman, J. B. (2002). *Exploring social capital and civic engagement to create a framework for community building*. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(4), 196-202.

These are the big ideas behind the learning activities overleaf. Use these to adapt the examples for your students, or as guidance to devise your own learning tasks.

**Consider the different ways social responsibility can be demonstrated**

Each of the four components of social responsibility can manifest as a set of knowledge, values, or behavior. All three aspects are important when developing social responsibility, although some may be more suited to certain instructional contexts than others.

- 1 Each component of social responsibility involves a core knowledge piece. To practice multiculturalism, one must have some awareness of different cultural identities. Knowing about governmental structures and current civic issues supports civic engagement.
- 2 Social responsibility is also reflected in one's values, such as believing in the importance of ethical behavior or caring about the well-being of the planet.
- 3 Lastly, social responsibility can be represented through one's actions, including working effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, practicing sustainability, or civic participation.

**Teach social responsibility within authentic contexts**

Many activities that support social responsibility allow students hands-on experience with authentic issues. Teaching about social responsibility in these authentic contexts helps students translate knowledge into behavioral practices.

- 1 Programs that enhance civic competence allow students to actively engage with their communities and political processes.
- 2 Many interventions supporting environmental competence involve students getting out of the classroom and experiencing nature first-hand.
- 3 Multicultural competence is supported by interacting with diverse groups.
- 4 Analyzing and discussing real world ethical dilemmas contributes to the development of ethical competence.

**Use active learning strategies**

Learners can also meaningfully engage with social responsibility through active learning activities.

- 1 Engaging in debates around ethical issues supports ethical competence. For example, given that many companies gather considerable data on their customers, students could debate what ethical obligations these companies have regarding the use of that data.
- 2 Analyzing case studies allows learners to think deeply about situations relevant to social responsibility that they haven't directly experienced.
- 3 Students can also role-play situations that involve social responsibility.

**Incorporate a broad range of activities when assessing social responsibility**

Because of its complexity, social responsibility can be assessed in a variety of different ways. Consider which activities are most well-suited to the specific components of social responsibility you are focusing on.

- 1 Knowledge of social responsibility can be assessed through written work products, such as a report on the functions of government or an analysis of an ethical dilemma case study.
- 2 Behavioral observation of naturally occurring or role-played activities that require social responsibility can also provide information on learners' social responsibility.
- 3 Learners can compose reflections or reports on experiences that address social responsibility, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Are you already incorporating social responsibility skills in your teaching? Tell us how. [efficacy@pearson.com](mailto:efficacy@pearson.com)