

## Guidelines for Queering Core Teacher Education Courses

We have employed four key approaches in developing content for the individual curriculum modules contained within this project:

- (1) Anti-homophobia/anti-transphobia interventions;
- (2) 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion strategies;
- (3) Queering pedagogies and approaches; and
- (4) Indigiqueering approaches.

We recognize that pedagogical strategies for 2SLGBTQ+-expansive education may take different forms and as a result may also have a range of diverse outcomes. No one approach will be exhaustive or comprehensive, and we recommend implementing multiple strategies to address specific contexts to effectively transform education in 2SLGBTQ+-expansive ways.

We utilize the language of *2SLGBTQ+-expansive education* to signal that these efforts go beyond mere inclusion efforts and, in keeping with the more expansive queering intention of the RISE Project, seeks to encourage approaches that transform understandings of 2SLGBTQ+ identities and what education can accomplish.

In the curriculum modules presented here, we offer 2SLGBTQ+-expansive content related to each of these approaches in the content modules. While we do include some Indigiqueer content in the curriculum modules, we have also dedicated an entire section of the website to developing Indigiqueer approaches to education. This section is being developed in on-going collaboration with Indigenous educators and community members whose expertise centres on sexuality and gender.

It is important to note, that these four approaches and the suggestions included in the curriculum modules are not one-size-fits-all, nor is the content exhaustive. Queering approaches by definition fall outside a taxonomized structure or “best practices” framework; rather, they seek to actively disrupt the stable categories of knowledge production and ways of knowing, including normative understandings of identity, gender and sexuality, constructions of knowledge, and social structures of oppression that privilege people living as cisgender-heterosexuals at the expense of everyone else (e.g., Britzman, 1995; Brockenbrough, 2015; Kumashiro, 2002; Luhmann, 1998; Mayo & Rodriguez, 2019; Pinar, 1998; Wilson & Laing, 2018). In some ways, what we are suggesting is a counter curriculum that questions, troubles, and problematizes normativity, binary thinking, and opens up space for different knowledges, identities and ways of being, relating and understanding in the classroom, both as students/learners and teachers/educators.

In recognition of this understanding, the RISE Project website offers starting points based within academic literature and rooted in the research findings of this project (see [RISE Foundational Research](#)). These approaches and suggestions are intended to provoke thinking

about how teacher education can better attend to the needs of 2SLGBTQ+ students and address 2SLGBTQ+ content as part of the formal educational system.

1. ***Anti-homophobic and anti-transphobic harassment interventions that seek to end harmful language, harassment, and bullying of 2SLGBTQ+ students.*** Countering homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in schools—especially overt and direct expressions of it that occur through verbal and physical harassment—is a common starting point for 2SLGBTQ+-expansive education because the safety of students is something that everyone understands as important (or more accurately *almost* everyone; some few would see harassment as a legitimate weapon in the struggle to make sure all children aspire to become cisgender-heterosexual). The hostile environment that many 2SLGBTQ+ people experience in schools is well-documented and there is ample evidence of the significant harm that it causes (e.g., Taylor & Peter et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2015; Peter et al., 2021), which has resulted in widespread recognition of the importance of introducing anti-harassment interventions for 2SLGBTQ+ students. Because the emphasis of these approaches is on ensuring student safety, interventions commonly take the form of policies and strategies to intervene in specific occurrences of homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying, harassment, or victimization.

Anti-harassment measures seek to ensure the safety of 2SLGBTQ+ students and are a vital first step in addressing the inequitable school climates that many 2SLGBTQ+ students experience. These reactive measures are clearly important in mitigating hostile environments and can open the door for other efforts. For instance, the goal of reducing homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic harassment ultimately requires proactive efforts to “humanize” 2SLGBTQ+ people and address the negative social and cultural attitudes toward sexual and gender diversity so that harassment is less likely to occur in the first place—and this leads many educators to seek to implement 2SLGBTQ+-inclusive strategies.

Teacher education should work to reinforce the importance of 2SLGBTQ+ anti-harassment measures by ensuring teacher candidates understand that hostile school climates do exist for 2SLGBTQ+ students, that 2SLGBTQ+ students exist in *every* class in *every* school (whether recognized and visible, or not), how to recognize when homo/bi/transphobic harassment happens, and what to do / how to respond when it occurs. This includes practical skill development about how to intervene and effectively address problematic harassment behaviours, and how to support harassed students—but it should also seek to prepare teacher candidates to *want* to do this work by providing them with opportunities to think deeply about their responsibility to look out for the safety, health, and wellbeing of 2SLGBTQ+ students and to work through any reluctance they might have to accept that, as “the adults in the room,” teachers have a legal, professional, and ethical obligation to support all students, including 2SLGBTQ+ students. Further, as 2SLGBTQ+ students do not always have supportive

parents/guardians, a supportive teacher may be the only supportive or trusted adult in their lives.

It is worth noting that there are two main limitations to focusing solely on anti-harassment measures for 2SLGBTQ+ students:

*First*, anti-harassment measures are necessarily reactive to negative occurrences and a hostile climate. They respond to and seek to correct problematic behaviour, and this may give teacher candidates the impression that school climates are inherently acceptable for 2SLGBTQ+ students *except* for the harassment they encounter. This is not the case: homo/bi/transphobia can play out in myriad ways that create inhospitable environments for 2SLGBTQ+ students and for sexual and gender diversity, including microaggressions and bias toward 2SLGBTQ+ people; attitudes defined by heteronormativity, cisnormativity, homonegativity, and transnegativity; conceptions of gender that are based on binary understandings; and often stereotypical assumptions privileging heterosexuality, monosexuality, and cisgender identities. This is why anti-harassment measures often lead educators, rightly, to further 2SLGBTQ+-inclusive efforts by seeking to redress social inequities for 2SLGBTQ+ people through visibility and representation in schools, classrooms, and curriculum.

*Second*, focusing only on harassment inadvertently positions 2SLGBTQ+ identities as being inherently “at-risk” or potential victims. This creates a problematic and potentially stigmatizing understanding of 2SLGBTQ+ students as being the problem for not “fitting in” to the normative school environment—and this also denies the resiliency, creativity, and vibrancy that 2SLGBTQ+ people bring to their school community. Highlighting the strengths and supporting the social lives of 2SLGBTQ+ students is a necessary next step.

2. ***2SLGBTQ+-inclusive approaches that seek to increase representation of 2SLGBTQ+ people and content in the curriculum and affirm their belonging in schools.*** 2SLGBTQ+-inclusive education models often seek to increase visibility of 2SLGBTQ+ people and incorporate representation in schools and curriculum, such as supporting Gay-Straight Alliances/Gender & Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) or including 2SLGBTQ+ content in the existing curriculum. 2SLGBTQ+-inclusive approaches are built on the principles of inclusive education and they are another key practice in making schools better for 2SLGBTQ+ people—from ensuring that 2SLGBTQ+ students and staff are visible and welcome through social inclusion, to ensuring that 2SLGBTQ+ content and activities support 2SLGBTQ+ students through curricular representation, visibility of 2SLGBTQ+ supports (e.g., 2SLGBTQ+ ally stickers, posters, school-wide events such as Pride Week), and staff professional development opportunities to support staff in inclusive efforts.

2SLGBTQ+-inclusive education practices are vital to making schools more open to and inclusive of gender and sexual diversity. They clearly communicate to all staff and students not only that 2SLGBTQ+ people matter and are welcome in schools but that they are part of broader society. Inclusion efforts are largely informed by inclusive-education principles (which originated in the field of special needs education and disability studies) and emphasize removing barriers to learning, providing universal and individual supports to learners, and ensuring that all students are included and visibly represented in schools. Accordingly, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive education emphasizes respectful inclusion of 2SLGBTQ+ persons in schools and learning environments. These importantly include representation in the curriculum, supporting emotional safety and social inclusion, visibility of 2SLGBTQ+ persons (including staff persons and families) and content in everyday school activities and events, the presence of 2SLGBTQ+-supportive policies, providing professional development for teachers and school staff, and providing social supports such as GSAs for 2SLGBTQ+ students.

Such 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion efforts are vital to support the wellbeing of 2SLGBTQ+ students in schools across the country to improve negative school climates that are based on stereotypes and misconceptions about 2SLGBTQ+ people and/or normative understandings of gender and sexuality. Yet many 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion efforts at the level of administration stop short at anti-harassment measures, failing to provide clear communication or resources to support 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion in curricular or school-wide efforts. Teacher education can help prepare teacher candidates to address this gap by ensuring there is a clear understanding about the benefits of 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion in schools.

One of the limitations of 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion is that it often focuses its efforts on simply finding ways to “add-and-stir” 2SLGBTQ+ content into the existing curricula and school content. While these efforts are useful, they also inadvertently affirm assimilationist strategies for including gender and sexuality within the existing curricula and school culture. As a result, these strategies largely leave school cultures—and the heteronormative and cisnormative beliefs that are embedded in them—unchallenged and untransformed. Instead, they seek to simply make schools less harmful for 2SLGBTQ+ students, resulting in 2SLGBTQ+ students being represented and “included” in school while remaining subject to normative attitudes and practices that may discourage their ability to express or explore their identities. While visibility and representation are key strategies and important in affirming the value and presence of 2SLGBTQ+ students in schools, they often miss out on opportunities to challenge dominant, oppressive thinking about (hetero)sexuality and gender (as binary).

Even activities that attempt to address gender or sexual diversity may inadvertently marginalize or put 2SLGBTQ+ students in compromising situations. For example, pronoun sharing: while it is appropriate to share your own pronouns and work to normalize conversations about gender and pronouns, asking others to publicly share their pronouns in introductions or to self-identify their pronouns in class activities may

put 2SLGBTQ+ people in uncomfortable or harmful situations. 2SLGBTQ+ people may not want to share for a variety of reasons—they may not be ready to do so yet, they may not feel comfortable sharing or want to disclose, or they may be questioning or in the process of working to understand their own gender identity—and an invitation to share their pronouns may put them on the spot, make them feel unsafe, or “force” them to mis-identify in order to avoid unwanted scrutiny. There is no single way to have respectful conversations about pronouns and it is warranted to consider ways to ensure safety and respect for 2SLGBTQ+ people when doing so.

Critiques of inclusive education generally focus on the limitations of who gets included and how. For example, simply adding 2SLGBTQ+ content, while it is important and accomplishes a lot for 2SLGBTQ+ visibility and representation, may leave social norms regarding the so-called “natural” superiority of cisgender heterosexuality unchallenged. These *add-and-stir* approaches are self-limiting insofar as they attempt to celebrate 2SLGBTQ+ identity without critiquing the oppressive social attitudes, systems, and structures that leave cisgender heterosexuality in place as nevertheless the preferred, desired, or only acceptable option. These inclusion efforts also take on an assimilationist character rather than a transformative one (e.g., Jennings, 2015). For instance, as with anti-harassment approaches, the predominance of vital work on bullying of 2SLGBTQ+ students has resulted in understandings of 2SLGBTQ+ students as always and necessarily being “at-risk” or victims, rather than highlighting the agency and resilience, and celebrating the diversity, of 2SLGBTQ+ people; inclusive efforts can fall short by playing into or reinforcing these dominant narratives. Scholars are increasingly talking about foregrounding humanizing perspectives that recognize the resiliency, agency, resistance, and social/cultural connectedness of 2SLGBTQ+ people (e.g., Asakura, 2016; Cruz, 2011; Fiola, 2020; Wilson, 1996, 2008). Ultimately, resiliency is not the end goal of 2SLGBTQ+-expansive education; rather, the goal is to transform social understandings and attitudes of heteronormativity and cisnormativity that marginalize 2SLGBTQ+ people to begin with. Resiliency itself develops out of the oppressive social marginalization that 2SLGBTQ+ people face; while resiliency is something to be celebrated and represents a vital part of the how 2SLGBTQ+ people survive and thrive in a world that works to marginalize them, ultimately it is a reaction to the oppression that 2SLGBTQ+-expansive education seeks to counter.

Another potential limitation of inclusion efforts focuses on how gender and sexual diversity is commonly presented as a monolithic experience, neglecting intersectional queer/trans identities based on racism, classism, or ableism (e.g., Kokozos & Gonzalez, 2020). This often results in a type of *homonormativity* regarding who is included and what 2SLGBTQ+ realities look like. The realities of Two-Spirit and queer and trans BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) in schools is different than that of white queer/trans students, and often representations of 2SLGBTQ+ people reinforce conventional representations of an ideal norm—gay, male, cisgender, white, thin, etc.—and neglect the experiences and visibility of those that are multiply marginalized (see

intersectionality). For example, a Two-Spirit trans student in a GSA may experience marginalization based on racialization or transmisogyny. These realities often go unaddressed when the focus is only on countering heterosexism/cissexism or relying on representation and visibility because the knowledge and understandings that are included may inadvertently limit understandings about 2SLGBTQ+ realities and erase the experiences of many 2SLGBTQ+ people.

3. ***Queering approaches that seek to challenge the dominant heteronormative and cisnormative attitudes toward gender and sexuality and about education itself.*** Based in queer theory, queering approaches to education challenge the stability of normative categories of knowledge and identity. Queer pedagogies, for instance, challenge social norms regarding learning, how knowledge is developed and passed on, and how knowledge can be oppressive (e.g., asking who benefits from this knowledge, who is not represented in it or who is oppressed by it). Queering approaches generally resist normative constructions of knowledge and seek to promote critical inquiry into subject matter that has transformative potential, especially regarding hetero/cisnormative social conventions and knowledge. These approaches can take a variety of forms, such as anti-oppressive pedagogy, self-reflexivity, questioning normative discourses and the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge, and/or the stability of identities (e.g., Bellini, 2012; Kumashiro, 2002; Luhmann, 1998; Sumara & Davis, 1999).

Queer pedagogy seeks to challenge “normal” practices of education, such as those that rely on an unproblematic transmission of knowledge or absolutist conceptualizations of learning. For instance, a queer pedagogical approach recognizes that learning, especially learning that seeks to challenge oppressive social norms, involves unlearning; it seeks to unsettle fixed notions of teaching, learning, desire, knowledge (and what can be known), and even identity (or subjectivities). Queering approaches resist normativity and challenge binary understandings. They may challenge understandings of essentialized identity as being fixed or stable, which has implications both for 2SLGBTQ+ identities and for cisgender-heterosexual identities. Building on this, queer pedagogy recognizes that knowledge and ignorance are not necessarily oppositional poles but mutually implicated in one another, and learning is a process that works to construct the self (Britzman, 1995). As such, queer pedagogy operates as “a radical form of educative praxis deliberately intended to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of ‘normalcy’ in schooled subjects” (Bryson & de Castell, 1993, p. 285) that leaves anyone outside the privileged norm of cisgender heterosexuality as marginalized, whether “celebrated” or not.

Queering approaches are intended to be expansive, to push beyond stable categories of knowing by introducing ways of knowing/understanding that exceed what is normatively recognized as “legitimate” knowledge. As such, queering approaches often involve a focus on gender and sexual diversity, in keeping with their roots in queer

theory and identity. However, queering approaches more broadly set out to resist normative conventions, practices, and understandings about, for example, knowledge or race or disability. This means that queer pedagogy continually looks to the margins and seeks to challenge normative understandings that marginalize or oppress. This is a demanding practice that requires teachers to continually interrogate their own understandings, knowledge, biases, and approaches to teaching and to resist the temptation of complacency or comfort in adopting stable pedagogical approaches or categories of knowing (in short, queer pedagogy resists a normativizing of teaching/learning or reliance on one-size-fits-all approaches). Queering perspectives in education are vital in challenging the normative or dominant-based function of teaching that reinforces heterosexuality, cissexism and genderism, white supremacy, ableism, and so on.

4. ***Indigiqueering approaches that centre Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and looking to Two-Spirit/Indigenous LGBTQ+ identities to unsettle fixed, colonial understandings of knowledge and of sexual and gender identity.*** Indigiqueer approaches seek to centre Indigenous knowledges and to disrupt settler-colonial, white supremacist ways of knowing and their attendant power structures, which work to validate certain forms of knowledge and invalidate or disregard Indigenous ways of knowing. As Indigiqueering approaches represent a paradigm shift for teacher education, they deserve substantive attention and we devote a section of the website to these approaches (see [Indigiqueer section](#) under development). In the curriculum modules generally, we have included some Indigiqueering content and point to locations where this approach may be particularly salient—recognizing that an Indigiqueering approach constitutes a substantive shift in established, institutionalized practices of pedagogy and learning. We would also emphasize the importance of local knowledge that is situated in the territories within which we teach and learn. Where we refer to Indigiqueering approaches to education, we would emphasize that these are not intended to be pan-Indigenous or to conflate the multiplicity of Indigenous knowledges, peoples, languages, or lands; rather, we invite contributions that bring local knowledges and Indigenous understandings to the foreground. We would also note that add-and-stir approaches for Indigiqueer content are insufficient and fail to adequately realize the aims of Indigiqueering education.

Indigiqueering approaches to education seek to centre Indigenous knowledges and support Two-Spirit (2S) and Indigenous LGBTQ+ identities in schools. These practices inherently challenge settler-colonial power structures in education by centering Indigenous knowledges about gender and sexuality, as they recognize the interrelated power structures of colonialism and gender/sexual binaries at work in educational and social normativities. The history of colonial genocide and epistemicide of Indigenous peoples in Canada interrupted millennia-long histories of cultural knowledge among Indigenous peoples that valued and respected 2SLGBTQ+ people (Fiola, 2020; Wilson & Laing, 2018).

While inclusion and prioritization of Indigenous voices is important, it is not the only approach. An Indigiqueering approach seeks to reconceptualize how teacher education prepares teacher candidates to participate in antioppressive education that values Indigenous knowledges. This approach attempts to avoid tokenistic inclusion strategies and tendencies to reduce Indigenous knowledges to monolithic or singular understandings of Indigenous peoples, emphasizing instead the relationship of gender and sexuality to culture, spirituality, language, and land within Indigenous cosmologies and ways of being and knowing.

For instance, as Alex Wilson (1996, 2008) describes, for Indigenous peoples the process of “coming out” may not be a liberatory one, but one that is marked by a disconnect from Indigenous knowledge and community due to the historical imposition of colonial values that malign gender and sexual diversity; rather, Wilson describes the process of “coming in” as a process of connecting identity with community, relationship to land, spirituality, knowledges, values about 2SLGBTQ+ people, and sovereignty.

The Indigiqueer portal is intended to provide a collaborative, crowd-sourced, and community-oriented commons for Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous non-2SLGBTQ+ educators and community members to submit content and contribute knowledges to Indigiqueering approaches. There are many ways that Indigiqueering approaches may be usefully undertaken. This Indigiqueer portal aims to provide a space online for Indigenous educators, 2S and Indigenous LGBTQ+ people, non-Indigenous queer and trans educators, and allies can learn with one another.

While the Indigiqueer portal invites collaboration of Indigenous educators and community members, the content that is created is available for non-Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ educators and allies to learn from the expertise, knowledge, and lived experiences of Indigenous educators and community members regarding gender and sexual diversity. It is worth noting that non-Indigenous educators should not be aiming to become “experts” and should be thoughtful about how to make use of Indigiqueering approaches. The role of allyship is a key consideration here and self-reflexivity regarding colonialism and settler privilege can be a useful iterative exercise as part of learning (see [Contexts module](#) for more on allyship). It is also important to recognize that certain notions of knowledge and expertise have a long history in hierarchical, colonial institutions. Indigiqueering approaches seek to unsettle fixations about defining “best” practices, as they can lead to proscription of innovation, reinforcement of norms, and the perpetuation of notions of hierarchical settler authority and expertise—all of which Indigiqueering works to unsettle.

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