

# Multicultural Learning Pods

## An alternative intercultural experience

### Overview

The Multicultural Learning Pods program connects domestic students enrolled in the Certificate in International Learning (CIL) with UAlberta international students and with students from the University of Alberta partner institutions. These pods meet regularly throughout the fall term via Zoom or Google Meet to have semi-structured discussions and to engage in collaborative activities that encourage cultural exchange.

### What is a pod?

A pod consists of 5-6 students, divided roughly evenly between domestic CIL students and international students.

### What would pods do together?

#### Semi-structured conversations

During pod meetings, students would engage in semi-structured conversations with their peers on a range of topics. Questions and sentence stems would be provided to prompt discussion. Topics of conversation would be grounded in Edward T. Hall's 10 primary messaging systems, each of which provides a window into culture.

As an example, one primary messaging system is Learning. So, students may be asked to discuss what "learning" looks like in their cultural context. Prompting questions may be: Who is considered wise in your culture? Who do people learn from? How do they interact with the teacher? Where does learning take place? What are your earliest memories of learning or schooling? How has learning or schooling changed for you as you have grown? The goal is for the conversation to take on a life of its own around the broader topic.

#### Collaborative activities

Pods would also move beyond talking and thinking to actually doing something together. What pods decide to do together will be up to the members of the pod. Pods are required to submit a brief proposal of what they plan to work on together throughout the term and to capture their collaborative activities in some way so they can be shared at the pod wrap-up in December.

Here are some examples of collaborative activities:

- Pod members introduce one another to their favourite dish or art form, teach one another how to recreate it and curate a digital collection of their works (i.e. of recipes, poetry, drawings, etc.).
- Pod members collaboratively document the experience of COVID 19 in their home city and around the world and create a digital scrapbook
- The pod works together to build a virtual treehouse in Minecraft and records a virtual tour, explaining the ideas behind the design

The output of the collaboration is not as important as the process of working across cultural differences to plan and execute something. It is important to be aware of the conversations and dynamics that these collaborations give rise to.

## What are the expectations outside of my pod?

International Visiting Student Program (IVSP) partner institution students will be expected to spend one hour a week in the pod meetings, one hour a week in the pod activities and about one hour a week preparing for the pods. Domestic students and current IVSP students will also be required to create a reflection journal. Currently, there is not the capacity for UAlberta staff to monitor additional reflection journals but if IVSP partner institutions are interested in using these pods to supplement current classes in their home institution and would require such journals, IVSP staff would be happy to work with staff or faculty to facilitate this.

## How much time will this program require?

Click [here](#) to see the tentative schedule.

## What is the cost to participate?

There is no fee to participate in this program.

## Who can participate?

Students must:

- be recommended from an IVSP partner institution
- have a sufficient level of English proficiency in order to communicate effectively with native English speakers
- be committed to at least three hours per week plus an additional 1 ½ hours per month for meetings and activities from September 29, 2020 (Orientation) to December 15, 2020 (Wrap-up)