

Department of Human Development and Family Science
Plan to Incorporate an Inclusion and Diversity Education Component into Graduate Education

Unless otherwise noted, topics will be covered in courses that all students in the program are required to take. If needed, official course syllabi will be revised to include coverage of these topics.

Required Topics:

1. The Virginia Tech Principles of Community as they apply to the valuing of human diversity and inclusion.

The Virginia Tech Principles of Community will be included in every syllabus within the graduate curriculum. Additionally, faculty will reaffirm our commitment to these principles and how individuals within HDFS, from a department level and within the field of HDFS, value human diversity and inclusion

2. The impact that personal actions and words have on self, others, and the communities— university, national, and global—in which we live; issues of privilege, bias, power, prejudice, and discrimination; concepts of multiple personal, social, and cultural identities.

Given the content of our courses, these topics are often discussed across our curriculum. Within those discussions, faculty will be asked to encourage students to think about how their actions can have an impact on others. Specifically, these topics will be covered in our methods courses where discussions about the importance of addressing privilege, bias, power, prejudice, and discrimination can influence the scientific process in our field. Ways to begin to dismantle the racist and/or paternalistic history of research will also be discussed in our methods courses (*HD 5514 Research Methods and HD 5524 Qualitative Research in HDFS*). In our methods courses, faculty will discuss with students about the kinds of research questions one chooses to ask, how one chooses to measure constructs, and how the sampling methods chosen can all reflect one's own bias as well as historical bias. For example, as quantitative researchers, we can choose to give or deny agency to participants and those choices have consequences for how research changes discourse on social justice.

3. Available avenues of redress and our shared responsibilities as active by-standers.

As part of discussion of the Virginia Tech Principles of Community, faculty will discuss what students should do if someone is contributing to hostile environment. Resources provided to students will include a discussion of the VT Graduate School Ombuds program, and these resources will be included in course materials and during the department's orientation for new students. We will also include information about the Ombuds program and resources about academic bullying in our department's graduate guide. For example, the following has been added to our graduate handbook:

The Virginia Tech Graduate School Ombudsperson (<https://graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu>) is a resource for students and provides a confidential space for graduate students to discuss concerns related to conflict outside of the HDFS department. The Ombudsperson can listen and discuss strategies for a constructive path forward. Description of the Ombudsperson:

Acting as an advocate for fairness, the ombudsperson provides information about institutional policies and works to help individuals effectively navigate conflicts. The Ombudsperson intends to help the visitor develop a greater understanding of the university system and learn more productive ways to communicate the concerns related to the conflicts experienced.

The Virginia Tech Graduate School and Department of Human Development and Family Science encourage graduate students to be active bystanders and to report academic bullying when they witness it. As Former Graduate Dean Karen DePauw stated,

Academic bullying manifests itself in many different ways and can include intimidation, humiliation, belittlement, embarrassment and undermining one's authority. Academic bullying also includes behaviors or comments that indicate disregard of one's concerns, ignoring contributions, minimize one's efforts in the eyes of colleagues, and other means of exclusion or withholding information...Academic bullying occurs throughout the academic or professional space; in the classroom, in meetings, at conferences, in the laboratory setting, in face-to-face interactions, and of course through email and social media.

Through the Disrupting Academic Bullying Initiative, (https://graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu/disrupting_academic_bullying.html), the Graduate School has created resources to help members of the VT community identify academic bullying and to report it through the [Disrupting Academic Bullying Reporting Form](#).

4. The process of individual introspection required both to understand one's own forms of implicit or unconscious bias and to create inclusive environments.

The graduate course *Qualitative Methods in HDFS* (HD 5524) addresses this topic because a major component of the course involves engaging students in the process of individual introspection known as reflexivity. Reflexivity is a hallmark of qualitative research. It is a process of self-transformation that requires us to explore and critically analyze our values, biases, and hegemonic assumptions of family life; a process of “*unsettling one's self to develop insecurities (rather than expertise) and question the basic assumptions, discourse, and practices used in describing reality*” (Letiecq, 2019, p. 7). Students are required to write a reflexivity paper in which they examine their own motivations for the kind of research projects they intend to pursue. In class, we engage in a number of discussions and activities designed to help students critically examine their personal identities, social locations, personal experiences, and private motivations that shape their research interests. We discuss how unchecked biases are infused throughout the research process, and ultimately, in the production of knowledge itself. In this course, reflexivity is emphasized as a critical component of research, such that the more we understand our biases, the better equipped we are to combat their potential to undermine our work.

Additional Topics/Focus Areas (as appropriate to the particular academic unit):

1. Inclusion and Diversity in a global context; institutional and governmental policies affecting immigration, accessibility, affordability, and related matters.

2. Historical perspectives on diversity and the impact of traditions of privilege on the development of the discipline represented by the particular academic unit; inclusive pedagogy.

Students in HDFS take two courses on theoretical foundations in HDFS (*HD 5005 Theories: Individual & Lifespan & HD 5006 Theories: Family & Systems*). As the historical perspectives are presented in these theories courses, discussions can be led on the shortcomings of traditional theories that did not address diversity and ways that diversity could be addressed within the theories. Additionally, when students take our teaching seminar (*HD 5974 IS: Teaching Seminar*) discussions of inclusive pedagogy will be held. Students can also develop diversity statements as they relate to teaching in the department's teaching seminar.

3. Effective strategies for inter- or intrapersonal conflict resolution; pathways to individual reconciliation of unconscious or implicit bias.

When discussing mentoring in the department's professional development seminar (*HD 6004: Prof Dev Seminar*), students will learn about strategies for effective conflict resolution, including ways to reconcile and address unconscious or implicit bias. They will also receive information about the Virginia Tech Graduate School Ombuds program as a resource for conflict resolution (see above for what has been added to our graduate handbook).