



**Interpersonal and socio-emotional skills**



**Creative and critical thinking**



**Learning to learn**



## Activity 16. Curricula mapping exercise

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### Learning outcomes

By the end of the activity, students should be able to:

- Understand more deeply what transversal skills are and what their connection to their curriculum is
- Identify their strengths and weaknesses in terms of transversal skills, as well as areas for improvement, in curricula

As regards transversal skills, students should be able to:

*Interpersonal and socio-emotional skills:*

- Express ideas clearly and fluently
- Use precise and descriptive/content-specific vocabulary to enhance the topic or message
- Share information in an organised and interesting way
- Share an analysis of the main message to interpret, synthesise and/or evaluate the meaning of the content in order to draw a logical conclusion about the topic
- Show empathy and use non-verbal communication and active listening

*Critical and creative thinking:*

- Acquire, process, produce, and evaluate information critically and from the perspectives of different fields and decisions, taking into account both individual and community perspectives
- Question norms, practices, and opinions, and to reflect on own one's values, perceptions and actions
- Develop innovative solutions to answer different questions and to create new and worthwhile ideas; elaborate and evaluate ideas in order to improve and maximise their creative efforts

*Learning to learn:*

- Use prior knowledge to plan a strategy for approaching a new task, and transfer what they have learned from one context to another, or from a previous task to a new task

## **Brief description of the activity**

Through this activity, members of the learning community, either teachers or students, will be able to understand how and to what extent transversal skills are connected with their curricula. They will map the subjects and courses in order to identify where transversal skills are explicitly and implicitly covered, and share the results with the group in order to discuss what should be modified to improve the teaching and learning of transversal skills in higher education. This may help teachers identify their needs and establish synergies between them to improve their abilities to teach transversal skills. As for students, it may help them deepen their knowledge on how curricula are structured and how to make sense of them. It can also foster collaborative improvements of current curricula.

## **Teaching-learning approach**

Collaborative learning

## **Activity plan: step by step**

### **Before the activity**

Before the activity, participants should familiarise themselves with the contents of the examined curricula, as well as the transversal skills that are applicable to their context.

Beyond that, you should also define how and to what extent the curriculum will be mapped. You can decide this according to, for example, a) specialization, where teachers examine only the courses that they teach and/or students the courses that they undertake, b) transversal skills, where participants identify specific transversal skills in the curriculum, c) period, where participants examine the curriculum of a certain semester, trimester, etc.

### Things to take into account prior to the activity:

1. **Context.** You need to decide whether you will perform the activity with teachers, students, or both. You also need to make sure that all participants are familiar with the curriculum and the concept of transversal skills, and able to identify these in academic documents.
2. **Materials necessary for its implementation.** The room should allow students to move around and sit in groups. You should also provide participants with a printed version of the curriculum, coloured pens and large pieces of paper or printed canvas. If you decide to do the sketching step of the activity using a virtual canvas, make sure that the room is provided with computers or that participants bring their own.
3. **Human resources necessary for its implementation.** The teacher(s) should be familiar with the curriculum and the concept of transversal skills. S/he or they should have a facilitating role in the discussion.

### During the activity

**Step 1. Identification of transversal skills in the curriculum.** The initial step of the mapping exercise can be performed individually, in small groups or with the entire work community according to your preferences and needs. Participants should go through the curriculum and identify the parts where transversal skills are explicitly or implicitly mentioned. They can mark these using coloured pens, for example. If they did this part individually, they can thereafter share what they found with each other.

**Step 2. Open discussion.** An open discussion should follow regarding how well incorporated transversal skills are in the curriculum. These questions can help you guide the discussion:

- What does the curriculum look like in terms of transversal skills? Are these well covered? Are there any subjects/courses/semesters where these are particularly present and/or lacking?
- Is there a right balance between the different stages of the degree(s)?
- How should the curriculum be changed so that transversal skills are appropriately covered?
- Is the curriculum missing any relevant transversal skill or, vice versa, is there any transversal skill which relevance we don't understand?
- Are all transversal skills appropriately associated with courses and learning outcomes? Is there any transversal skill that is not associated with a learning outcome so that it's not actually implemented?

**Step 3. Sketching the results.** After the open discussion, participants should sketch a map of transversal skills that pictures where and why transversal skills are covered in the curriculum, either explicitly or implicitly, and where and why these should be covered better. For this purpose, you can either use large blank sheets or pre-designed canvas, in which you can place all curricula courses in the first column and transversal skills in the horizontal. Then, you can check where the different transversal skills are placed, regarding the courses.

### After the activity

After the activity, it's time for self-reflection. Ask them to self-reflect about the importance of incorporating transversal skills in higher education for professional development, as well as how to cover these at the different stages of their studies. If the activity is performed with students, ask them to reflect about their knowledge of transversal skills and level of competence applying these. Beyond that, the sketched results can be displayed for others to visualise the results and raise awareness about the topic.

### Role of teacher(s)

In this case, teachers and students are in a position of equality where all parties can express their opinions based on their own judgment. It is important for the teaching team, given their asymmetrical relationship with the students, to internalize their role in this activity, demonstrating that they are not assuming any evaluative role at this moment. It is the responsibility of the teaching team to ensure a trusting environment and facilitate that all parties feel confident to express their opinions and contribute to the common discussion. To achieve this, it can be helpful that, in the case of working in subgroups, these are mixed, and there is a moderator who ensures the participation of everyone.