Cultural Competency

Self Assessment Checklist

Overview

Cultural competency skills are essential for conducting ethical, inclusive, and effective clinical research. This self-assessment checklist is designed to help clinical research professionals evaluate their awareness, knowledge, and skills when working with diverse populations. By reflecting on your responses, you can identify strengths and opportunities for growth in advancing culturally responsive and equitable research practices.

When to use this checklist

- When designing or implementing research protocols to promote inclusivity and equitable representation.
- Prior to engaging with diverse participant populations in clinical research to ensure cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.
- To inform institutional equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) strategies.
- As part of ongoing professional development and continuous learning.
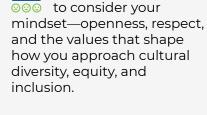
Overview of the Self-Assessment Sections

Knowledge: Reflects your understanding of how culture, identity, and lived experience influence health, access to care, and research participation—and how your understanding supports inclusive and ethical practice.

Skills: Focuses on the practical skills that support culturally responsive research, including communication, resource access, and navigating differences with sensitivity.

Attitudes: Invites you to consider your mindset—openness, respect, and the values that shape how you approach cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Practices: Explores how you embed cultural responsiveness into your research practices, community engagement, and ongoing learning..

Reflection and Growth: Highlights your commitment to learning from experience, building cultural competency over time, and advocating for inclusive practices.

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Supporting EDIA at N2

As part of N2's ongoing commitment to advancing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA), we've introduced the EDIA Champion role—currently fulfilled by Munaza Jamil and Ali Hosseini. This role was created to support the N2 community and will continue to evolve based on the needs and feedback of our members.

In addition to offering support and guidance on EDIA-related questions, the EDIA Champions help foster inclusive research practices by:

- Collaborating on resource development and training initiatives
- Supporting inclusive communications and materials
- Facilitating connections with community partners and underrepresented groups

If you have questions, ideas, or would like support, we warmly invite you to connect with the EDIA Champions through the EDIA Contact Webform or by emailing EDIA@n2canada.ca.

EDIA CHAMPION AT N2 CANADA

The EDIA Champion is here to help you take meaningful steps—whether you're developing your first EDIA strategy or deepening existing efforts. With the right tools and support, your team can build research that truly reflects and respects the communities it serves.

How the EDIA Champion Can Support Your Team

- Develop or refine your EDIA strategy
- Review research materials for inclusivity
- Connect with local community partners
- Support cultural competency training
- Lead customized EDIA workshops
- Share practical tools and templates

Whether you're part of a research site, academic team, sponsor group, or industry partner—if you're working to make clinical research more inclusive, we're here to support you. EDIA Champions Munaza Jamil and Ali Hosseini lead N2 Canada's EDIA initiatives, helping embed equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility across the network. Connect at EDIA@n2canada.ca or scan the QR code to get started.

Why Connect With the EDIA Champion?

- Stronger community partnerships
- Greater participant trust and retention
- More representative, meaningful research findings
- Improved ethical and regulatory alignment
- Stronger trial teams through EDIA training

Let's build more inclusive research—together

Ready to take the next step? Contact the EDIA Champions today at EDIA@n2canada.ca or scan the QR code to fill out a form.

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Recommended Resources

Cultural Competency Skills in Clinical Research Course – N2 Canada (2024)
This course is designed to equip learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in the context of clinical research. Please contact n2@n2canada.ca for information on how to access this course.

- UBC ISP Self-Assessment Tool

- White Paper: Bridging the Gap

- Indigenous Cultural Safety in Research Framework (2022)

- How To Make Your Writing More Sensitive – And Why It Matters

- Cultural Understanding - Challenges to Effective Communication

- 14 Examples of Unconscious Bias in Job Descriptions

- What's Your Cultural Profile?

- Improving health research among Indigenous Peoples in Canada | CMAJ

- What is Cultural Humility?

- Rethinking Cultural Competence: Shifting to Cultural Humility

- Cultural Competence Toolkit

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion DEI Survey

- Toward a National Action Plan for Achieving Diversity Clinical Trials

- Status of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) in Canada's Life Sciences Sector

- San'Yas Anti-racism Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program

- EDI Knowledge Mobilization and Dissemination Centre at Sheridan

Understanding key terms

To ensure clarity, here are definitions of the key terms used in this checklist [definitions have been derived from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation online glossary: Glossary of Terms – Canadian Race Relations Foundation]

Bias: A subjective opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination, often formed without reasonable justification, which influences the ability of an individuals or group to evaluate a particular situation objectively or accurately.

Culture: The mix of ideas, beliefs, values, behavioural and social norms, knowledge and traditions held by a group of individuals who share a historical, geographic, religious, racial, linguistic, ethnic and/ or social context,. This mix is passed on from one generation to another, resulting in a set of expectations for appropriate behaviour in seemingly similar contexts.

Cultural Competency: The ability to effectively engage and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds by understanding and respecting their cultural differences.

Diversity: A term used to encompass the acceptance and respect of various dimensions including race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, age, physical abilities, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

Equity: A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

Health Disparities: Differences in health outcomes and access to healthcare that are linked to social economics, and environmental factors, often influenced by race, ethnicity status.

Inclusion: The extent to which diverse members of a group (society/organization) feel valued and respected.

Intersectionality: The experience of the interconnected nature of ethnicity, race, creed, gender, socio-economic position etc., (cultural, institutional and social), and the way they are imbedded within existing systems and define how one is valued.

Implicit Bias: Unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that affect decision-making and interactions with diverse groups.

Racism: Racism is a belief that one group is superior to others performed through any individual action, or institutional practice which treats people differently because of their colour or ethnicity. This distinction is often used to justify discrimination. There are three types of racism: Institutional, Systemic, and Individual.

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How to use this rating scale

This tool is designed to support individual reflection. It provides an opportunity to assess where you currently stand in key competency areas, identify your strengths, and highlight potential areas for professional development.

As you complete this checklist, take time to honestly evaluate your current practice. Your responses will help you recognize competencies you've mastered, and those where growth is still in progress.

After completing the checklist:
- Review your responses across all competency areas.
- If you notice that you've selected "**Not at all**" or "**Working on this**" frequently, these may represent opportunities for growth and areas to focus your development goals.
- If many of your responses are "Yes, I consistently demonstrate this", that's fantastic! It reflects strong professional capability—your next step is to continue building on that momentum and sharing your expertise to support others in the field.

This checklist is intended as a reflective guide to help you take ownership of your development as a clinical research professional and continue advancing principles of EDI in your work. Cultural competence is a continuous journey. Use this tool regularly to track your progress and reinforce your commitment to equitable and ethical clinical research.

RATING	DESCRIPTION
[N] No/ Not at all/Don't know	I have not yet engaged in this area or do not know and need to seek guidance to find out the answer
[W] Working on this	I am aware of this and am actively working on learning more
[Y] Yes, I consistently demonstrate this	This is something I am doing, and am in a position to help others with it.
[N/A] Not applicable	This is not relevant to me or my work

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Knowledge

This section invites you to reflect on how culture, identity, and lived experience influence health, access to care, and research participation—and how your understanding of these factors supports inclusive and ethical practice.

I know about different health values, beliefs and practices in the communities involved in my research.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I am aware of the varying prevalence of diseases across different cultural groups.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I understand how cultural practices might influence health and health research decisions.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I am aware that culture intersects with other social determinants of health such as sex, gender identity, and more, which can further influence the health, wellbeing and experiences of participants/patients.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I understand how past experiences of racism or discrimination in the healthcare and/or health research setting could negatively influence someone's willingness to participate in research.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I understand that even within a cultural group, there will be diversity in experiences between individuals.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I understand the history, culture, values, beliefs and challenges of the Indigenous Peoples of the area in which I live and work.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

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Skills

This section focuses on the practical skills that support culturally responsive research. Reflect on how you adapt your communication, access inclusive resources, and navigate differences with sensitivity and confidence.

I adapt my communication style to be sensitive to cultural nuances.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I know how to access interpreters or multilingual resources when needed during the conduct of my research.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I employ recruitment strategies that reflect cultural diversity.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I am skilled at navigating conflicts or misunderstandings due to cultural differences.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

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Attitudes

This section invites you to consider your mindset. It focuses on openness, respect, and the values that shape how you approach cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion in your research practice.

I acknowledge the need for diversity in trials to ensure the creation of treatments that are beneficial to all.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I acknowledge that I have more to learn about different cultures and am open to this learning.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I am open to exploring how traditional medicinal uses and practices might be integrated into my research design

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I actively work to recognize and mitigate my own biases.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I genuinely respect and value cultural diversity in my professional practice.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I exhibit empathy and compassion towards participants from all cultural backgrounds.

Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

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Practices

This section focuses on what you put into action. It invites you to reflect on how you embed cultural responsiveness into your research practices, community engagement, and ongoing learning.

I actively integrate inclusive practices throughout every stage of my research process—from planning and facilitation to maintenance and knowledge dissemination.			
Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I engage with community leaders or cultural groups to better understand and serve the community.			
Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I seek feedback from appropriate individuals [ie participants, patient partners, cultural liasions etc] regarding cultural aspects of the research process and apply this feedback.			
Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I regularly participate in training or workshops on cultural competency.			
Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

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🌱 Reflection and Growth

This section invites you to think about your ongoing development. It highlights your willingness to reflect, learn from challenges, and grow your commitment to cultural competency over time.

I regularly reflect on my level of cultural competency skills and seek ways to improve.			
Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

When I encounter cultural missteps, I learn from them rather than becoming defensive.			
Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I advocate for cultural competency skills and training within my organization or team.			
Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

I am willing to be mentored on issues of cultural competence in clinical research.			
Not at all / Don't know	Working on It	Yes	Not Applicable

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