

Controversial issues - Topic 2: Handling controversial issues safely

Managing controversial issues in the classroom – What skills do teachers need?

To be able to handle controversial issues safely in the classroom, teachers need a range of skills. These include:

- how to select issues for discussion
- how to deal with their own personal beliefs and biases
- how to respond to racist, sexist and other derogatory remarks
- how to facilitate a discussion without taking sides
- how to encourage students to see other points of view
- how to teach students to discuss issues respectfully
- how to prevent emotions from boiling over in the classroom
- how to cope when lacking expertise on an issue.



Ask your teaching staff to assess their weakest skills in terms of their ability to deal with controversial issues. Use this information as a basis on which to select appropriate forms of **professional development** when the opportunity arises.