



Preparing Learners for Uncertainty in Health Professions
Resource

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Key Questions:

- Why is it important for your learners to develop adaptive responses to uncertainty (e.g. career value)?¹
- Are other educators engaging in uncertainty tolerance teaching activities in the unit or degree I teach?²
- Consider all those involved in delivering uncertainty tolerance teaching activities. What experiences do they have with engaging in uncertainty tolerance teaching practices?³
- What is your comfort level, and your teaching teams', with uncertainty?⁴
- Have you created a psychologically safe environment for your teaching team and for the learners?⁵
- What are the assessment strategies you would like to introduce to support learners in their uncertainty tolerance development?⁶
- What institutional policies may represent barriers or enablers of uncertainty tolerance teaching activities?⁷



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Considerations:

¹Without a clear rationale for learning to manage uncertainty, learners are more likely to disengage and defer to learning approaches that privilege certainty (for more on moderators, see [Chapter 5](#)).

²If you are the only educator engaging with uncertainty tolerance teaching activities and practices, learners may be less inclined to engage in this type of learning. Furthermore, learners will likely have less capacity to adaptively respond to educational uncertainty.

³Educators' awareness of how to effectively engage in uncertainty tolerance moderators can enhance the impact of these moderators on learners. Educators, without adequate knowledge of approaches which support learners' uncertainty tolerance development, may unknowingly and inappropriately cause learners to engage in maladaptive responses to uncertainty (for more on moderators, see [Chapter 5](#)).

⁴Developing uncertainty tolerance teaching activities appears to result in educators managing their own uncertainty. Many educators have experiences, as both learners and educators, in teaching for certainty - so teaching for uncertainty tolerance development is often novel and unknown.

⁵Experiencing uncertainty as a learner or educator can be destabilising, and also challenge one's identity (see [Chapter 7](#)). Creating a psychologically safe environment can help learners and educators adapt as they learn to manage uncertainty, and be more open to trying different solutions to address the uncertainty (for more on this, see institutional moderators in [Chapter 5](#)).

⁶Without a clear assessment strategy, learners and educators may struggle to identify attributes which have developed to help them adaptively manage uncertainty. Furthermore, assessment strategies can help provide motivation for engaging with uncertainty tolerance teaching practices (for more on assessments, see [Chapter 6](#)).

⁷Inflexible policies, such as those related to assessment or what is permitted in teaching spaces, may limit the extent to which uncertainty tolerance teaching practices can be implemented (for more on institutional moderators, see [Chapter 5](#)).