

## **F-58: Seeking Cultural Competence in Hiring: Effective Questions for Applications, Interviews and References**

Participants will practice designing effective questions covering the knowledge, skills and experience inherent in cultural competence. Examine how the duties and responsibilities need to shape the level of questions to be asked. We will identify the specific content of effective questions and discuss the critical importance of search committee member agreement, and what each search committee member is expecting to learn.



### **The questions you choose to ask applicants during a hiring process communicate:**

- ✓ what issues you think are most important for a person in this position to understand;
- ✓ what experience you think is most needed by someone to successfully carry out the responsibilities of the position;
- ✓ what skills you believe the person in this position will need to have already developed in order to be successful; and,
- ✓ whether or not this position is seen as important to the organization

## Designing Hiring Questions using the Domains of Learning

### Question Analysis Charts Examples

**Knowledge, value or skill being evaluated:** *knowledge to work effectively and respectfully with a diverse group of faculty, staff and students*

Cognitive Domain	Question	Level of Learning needed?
1. Getting it – The applicant has acquired knowledge, facts, theories such that he or she can read them, quote them, or refer to them when appropriate.	<i>How would you define a diverse group of faculty, staff and students?</i>	
2. Understanding it – The applicant understands what he or she has acquired well enough to explain it to others.	<i>What is the importance of considering diversity as a factor for the person in this position?</i>	
3. Applying it – The applicant can apply the cognitive information appropriately in answering questions.	<i>Please give an example of when you have changed or altered your practice because of working with a diverse group?</i>	
4. Analyzing it – The applicant can analyze the information, break it into its component parts and consider the relationship between these parts, and use this analysis to respond to scenarios or role play situations.	<i>Please provide at least two examples of times when you have altered or changed your practice because of the diversity of the group with whom you were working. What changes did you make? Did they have the effects you hoped for at the time? What did you learn from each situation?</i>	
5. Recombining it – The applicant can synthesize the component parts of the information in new ways, so as to arrive at new knowledge, understandings or applications, and can demonstrate this in responding to questions or scenario situations.	<i>(same question as above with an additional question)</i>  <i>How would you expect to apply what you learned from these situations to the position for which you are applying?</i>	
6. Evaluating it – The applicant can evaluate the knowledge, facts, theories, etc, using appropriate standards to judge their usefulness and importance.	Using question under #5, add: <i>How would you respond to a criticism from a student that you are just making such changes in order to be politically correct?</i>  <i>What if the criticism was coming from a colleague? From a head of school?</i>	

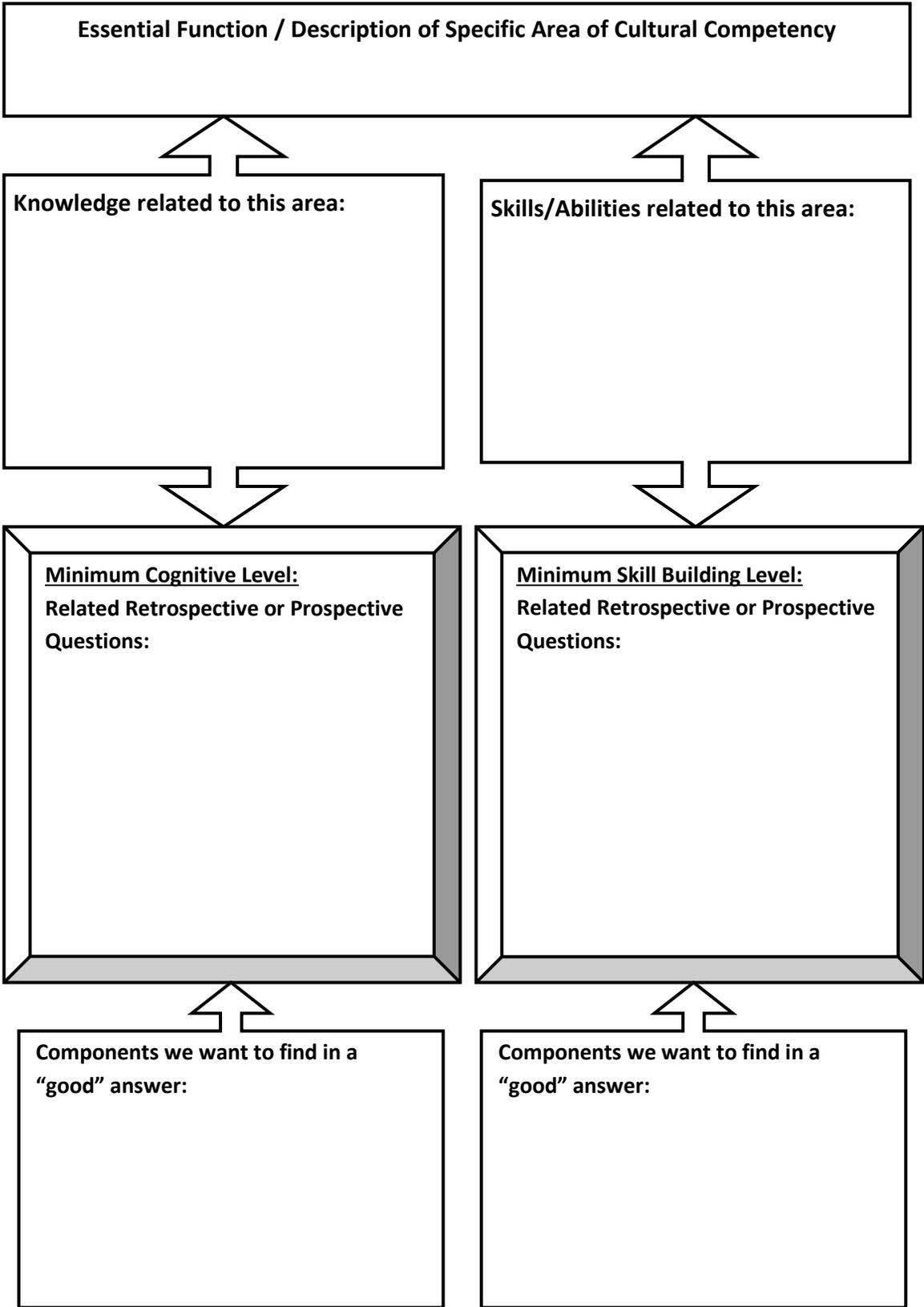
**Knowledge, value or skill being evaluated:** placing a high value on equity in educational opportunity -- that all students have the support they need to be successful

Affective Domain	Question	Level of Learning needed?
1. Receiving – The applicant can provide examples of when he or she has been willing to listen and hear about the experiences, values, beliefs or feelings of others.	<i>What student experiences have helped you understand what is needed to improve educational equity?</i>	
2. Responding – The applicant can provide examples of when he or she has been willing to talk about her or his own experiences, values, beliefs or feelings.	<i>Explain how your own experiences in education have helped shape your beliefs about educational equity?</i>	
3. Valuing – The applicant can provide examples of when he or she has been willing to examine different ways to interpret or see the same experience, and of exploring the worth of other perspectives.	<i>Please provide examples of how your beliefs around educational equity have changed over time, and what factors have influenced those changes.</i>	
4. Self-evaluation – The applicant can provide examples of when he or she has gained new understandings and insights from exploring these new interpretations or perspectives, and can describe how his or her behavior was or could be different as a result.	Same question as #3 and then add: <i>What would you do differently now based on how you beliefs and values about educational equity have changed over time?</i>	
5. Internalization – The applicant can provide examples of how new, different and/or reorganized beliefs and values based on new experiences, knowledge and/or understandings have changed his or her behavior.	A combination of #3 and #4, adapted as a reference question, would likely be the best way to explore this area.	

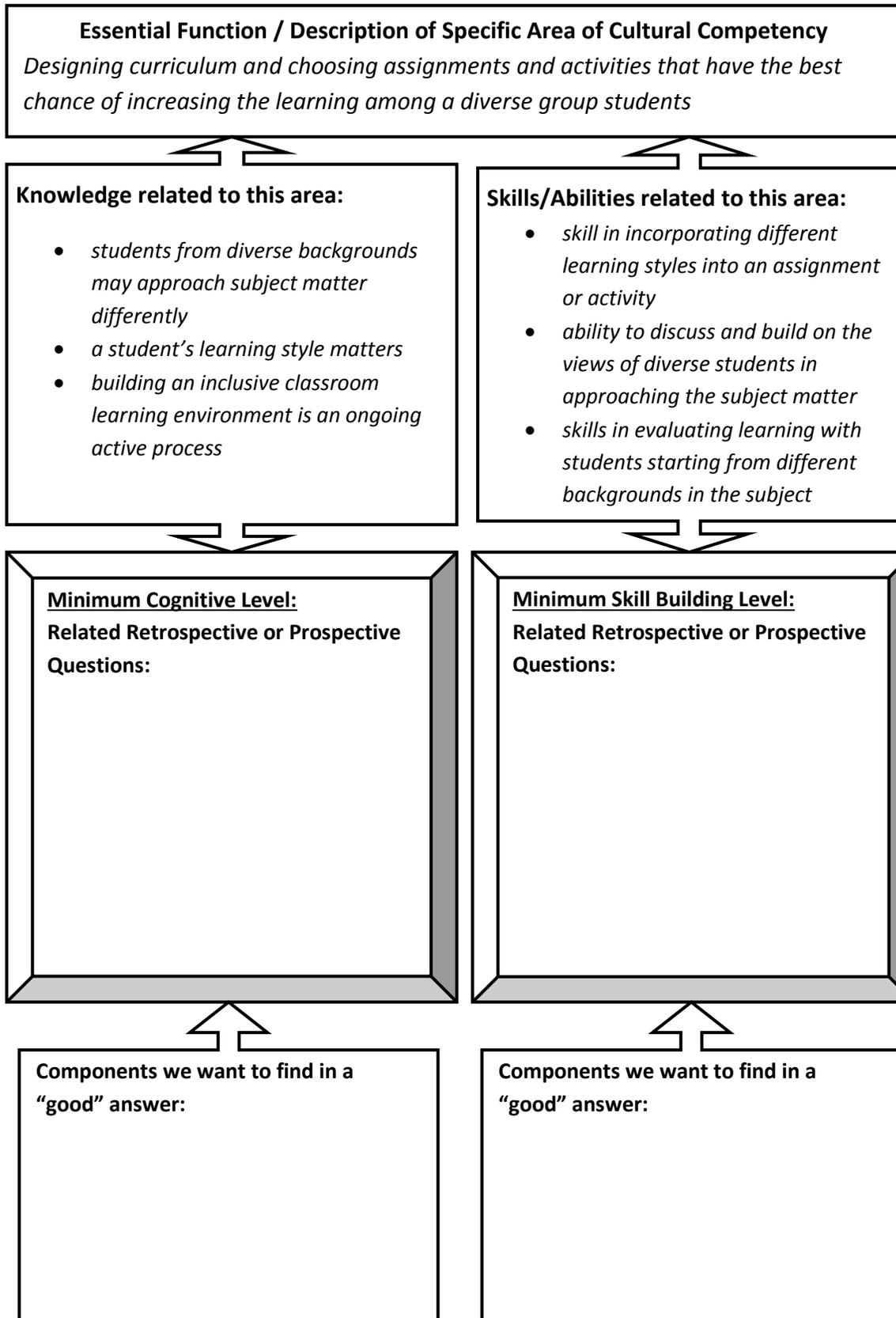
**Knowledge, value or skill being evaluated:** skills at choosing pedagogy and curriculum appropriate to a diverse group of students

Skill Building Domain	Question	Level of Learning needed?
1. Perception of the skill – The applicant is aware that there is a particular skill or set of skills involved in doing a particular act.	<i>What skills do you see as necessary when choosing curriculum and learning activities for a diverse group of students?</i>	
2. Readiness of attempt the skill – The applicant can explain what was/is necessary to prepare for performing the skill.	Added to question #1: <i>What experiences in your background have led you to develop these skills?</i>	
3. Guided practice – The applicant can give examples of beginning to practice the skill, getting feedback and learning to improve.	<i>Please give us one or two examples of attempts you made in the past to modify curricula or learning activities to meet the needs of a diverse student group which did not work as planned. Explain how you discovered that these were not working, and what you learned as a result.</i>	
4. Simple mastery – The applicant can give examples of times when he or she has used the basic skill.	<i>Please give us three examples of ways you have modified curricula or learning activities to fit the needs of a diverse student group, and what you learned in each case.</i>	
5. Complex mastery – The applicant can provide detailed examples of opportunities he or she has had to use the skill in difficult situations, what he or she did in those situations, and what was learned from those experiences.	Two suggested approaches here:  1) use question #4 and add the detail about difficult situations; and/or, 2) provide the applicant with a syllabus and the description of the students in class, and ask how he/she would change the syllabus and why.	
6. Adaptive mastery – The applicant can provide detailed examples of using the skill well outside of a controlled setting and of correcting his or her own behavior and/or taking initiative to get the needed instruction.	<i>Please give us one or two examples when you were asked to work with a group of students who were different in ways in which you had little experience. What resources or other experiences did you use to gain the skills needed to work effectively with this group? How would you evaluate your success? What might you do differently now?</i>	

**Question Generator: Template**



## Question Generator: Example 1



## Question Generator: Example 1 – Designing Appropriate Questions

### Essential Function / Description of Specific Area of Cultural Competency

*Designing curriculum and choosing assignments and activities that have the best chance of increasing the learning among a diverse group students*

#### Knowledge related to this area:

- *students from diverse backgrounds may approach subject matter differently*
- *a student's learning style matters*
- *building an inclusive classroom learning environment is an ongoing active process*

#### Skills/Abilities related to this area:

- *skill in incorporating different learning styles into an assignment or activity*
- *ability to discuss and build on the views of diverse students in approaching the subject matter*
- *skills in evaluating learning with students who are starting from different backgrounds in the subject*

#### Minimum Cognitive Level: 3

##### Related Retrospective or Prospective Questions:

- *What have you learned from your past experience about how a student's background or past experiences with subject matter affects his/her ability to learn?*
- *What would you do here to build an inclusive learning environment, given the diversity of our student body?*

#### Minimum Skill Building Level: 4

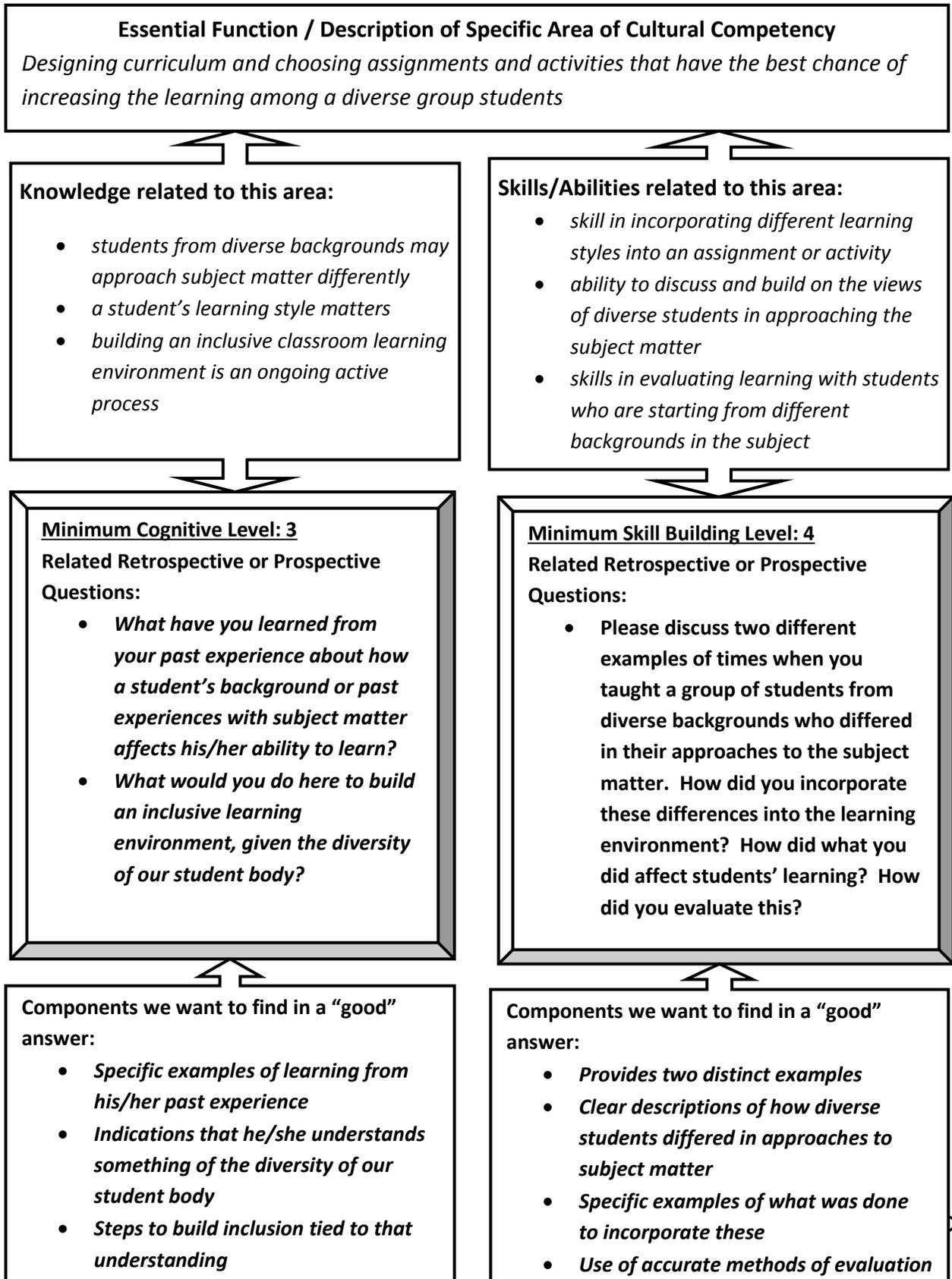
##### Related Retrospective or Prospective Questions:

- **Please discuss two examples of times when you taught a group of students from diverse backgrounds who differed in their approaches to the subject matter. How did you incorporate these differences into the learning environment? How did what you did affect students' learning? How did you evaluate this?**

Components we want to find in a "good" answer:

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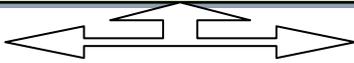
## Question Generator: Example 1 – Components of a good answer



# Question Evaluation Template

Question # \_\_\_\_

Skills/Knowledge related to this area



Components in a "good" answer

Empty yellow box for notes on skills/knowledge related to the area.

Empty blue box for notes on components in a "good" answer.

INTERVIEW NOTES:

Very strong evidence skills /knowledge are present

Strong evidence skills /knowledge are present

Some evidence skills /knowledge are present

Very little evidence skills /knowledge are present

No evidence skills /knowledge are present

## Question Evaluation Example

**Question # \_\_\_**

**Please discuss two different examples of times when you taught a group of students from diverse backgrounds who differed in their approaches to the subject matter. How did you incorporate these differences into the learning environment? How did what you did affect student’s learning? How did you evaluate this?**

**Skills/Knowledge related to this area**

- Students from diverse backgrounds may approach subject matter differently.
- Ability to discuss and build on the views of diverse students in approaching subject matter
- Skills in evaluating learning with students who are starting from different backgrounds in the subject

**Components in a “good” answer**

- Provides two distinct examples
- Clear descriptions of how diverse students differed in approaches to subject matter
- Specific examples of what was done to incorporate these
- Use of accurate methods of evaluation

**INTERVIEW NOTES:**

**Very strong evidence skills /knowledge are present**

**Strong evidence skills /knowledge are present**

**Some evidence skills /knowledge are present**

**Very little evidence skills /knowledge are present**

**No evidence skills /knowledge are present**

## Question Generator: Example 2 – Head of School

**Essential Function / Description of Specific Area of Cultural Competency**  
*Overseeing the development and evolution of policies and procedures to ensure equitable and inclusive working and learning environments for all members of the school community.*

- Knowledge related to this area:**
- *Current policies and practices may not be designed to be inclusive of current and future members.*
  - *Past practices may favor majority group members at the expense of others.*
  - *More equitable and inclusive policies need accountability to be effective.*

- Skills/Abilities related to this area:**
- *skills in critical analysis of policies and procedures to examine impact on all affected populations*
  - *abilities to discuss inequitable policy impacts with key decision makers and effectively lead the change process*
  - *skills in building accountability into the policy change development*

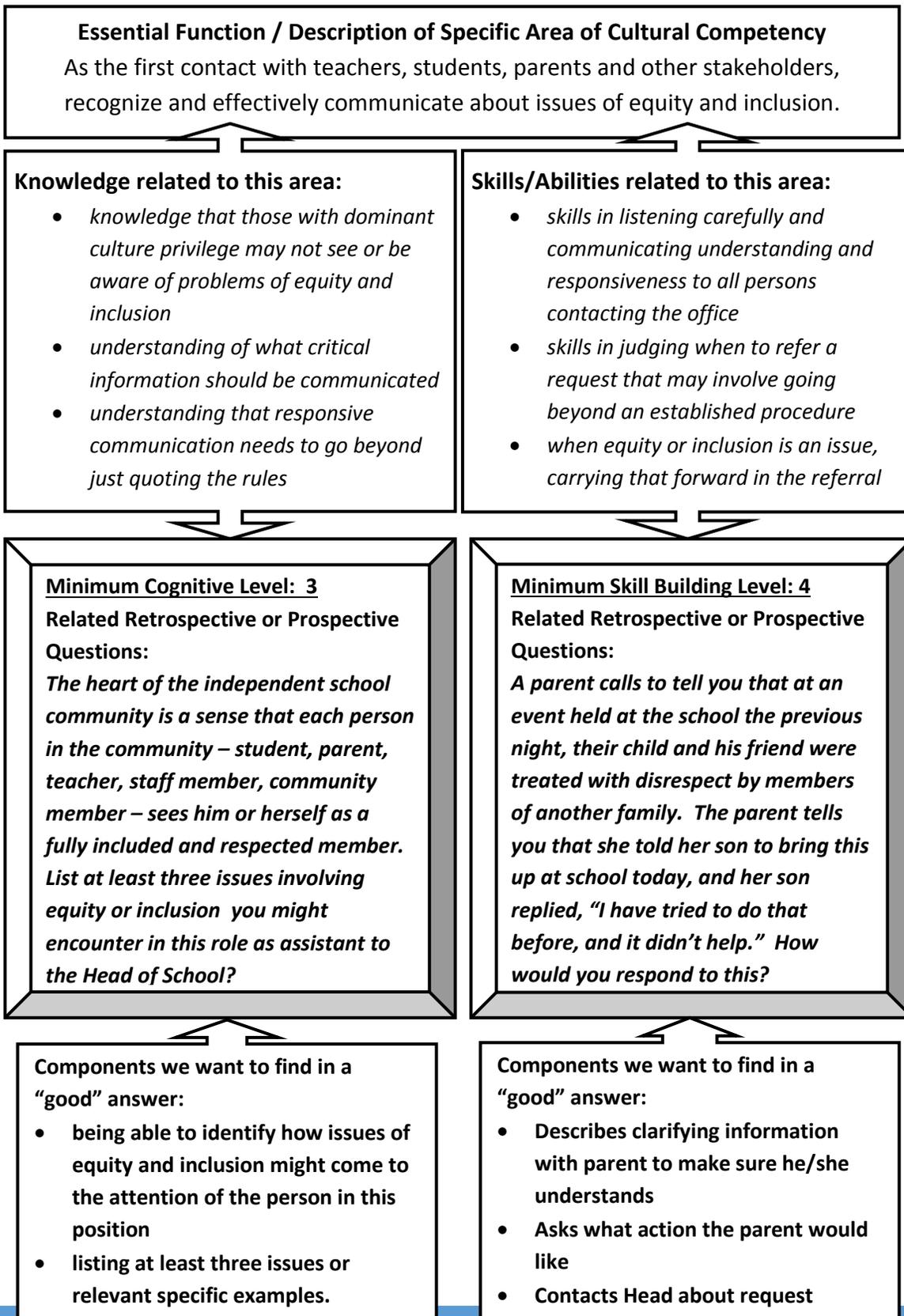
**Minimum Cognitive Level: 5**  
**Related Retrospective or Prospective Questions:**  
*Institutional policies and procedures designed to ensure equity and inclusion can become out of date and ineffective. From your point of view, how and why does this happen? What are the challenges to identifying this? What are the issues involved in remedying it? What makes you an effective leader in this area?*

**Minimum Skill Building Level: 5**  
**Related Retrospective or Prospective Questions:**  
*Please provide at least two examples of your involvement in updating policies and procedures to increase equity and inclusion. What were the expected and unexpected challenges involved? What was your leadership role in dealing with these challenges? In each case, how would you assess the success of the change process?*

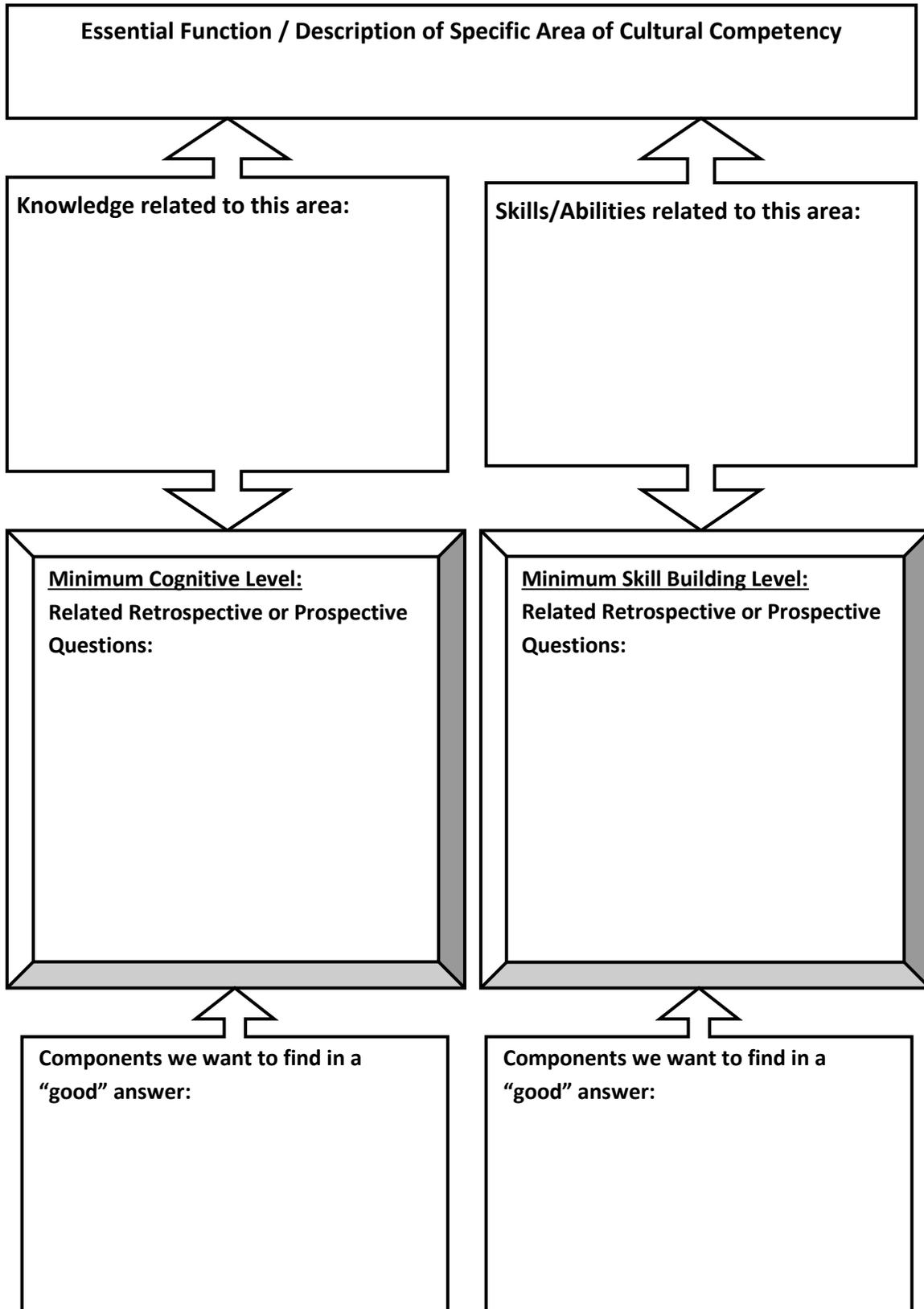
- Components we want to find in a “good” answer:**
- **Demonstrated understanding that evolving populations and educational needs drive this change process**
  - **Awareness of how those benefiting from current policies may resist change**
  - **Not underestimating the difficulties involved making needed changes**

- Components we want to find in a “good” answer:**
- **Two distinct examples**
  - **Going beyond obvious challenges to identify unexpected ones**
  - **Candidate can articulate the leadership role he/she played in each case**
  - **Choice of appropriate evaluation methods to measure success**

## Question Generator: Example 3 – Administrative Assistant to Head of School



## Question Generator: Template



## Some Best Practices for Designing Effective Questions in Applications, Interviews and References to Assess Candidates' Cultural Competence

-  Distinguish between asking questions about knowledge and skills from questions that probe attitudes and values. Attitudes and values, by themselves, are not sufficient indicators of competence in judgements and actions. Since you want to know what the candidate knows how to do, and not just what the candidate values, concentrate on questioning the latter.
-  Avoid asking the candidates to share experiences from their personal lives. The answers to these questions do not tell you what the candidate knows how to do in circumstances relevant to the position in question in your school.
-  In both cases above, and particularly if most, if not all, the members of your search committee have many different kinds of dominant cultural privilege, questions about a “diverse” candidate’s attitudes, values, or personal life experiences can seem unnecessarily intrusive as well as unprofessional. This can be hard for those of us with many layers of dominant culture privilege to understand because we “really want to get to know the person better.” My best example of this for me, as a math and science teacher, would be if someone asked me, while trying to evaluate my culturally competent teaching skills, to explain my experiences as a student in math and science classes based on my gender. A much more professionally respectful and appropriate question would be “Please give us two or three examples of when issues of gender expression or gender identity among your students caused you to modify your curriculum or pedagogy in order to increase equity in the learning environment. In each case, explain what you did, what your expected outcome was, how well your modifications worked, and what you learned from the process.”
-  TAKE THE TIME to write detailed and specific questions about what you want to know. This communicates to the candidate that you really care about the issues involved, and are seeking someone who has spent the time to develop the needed skills.
-  TAKE THE TIME to discuss, once a question has been crafted, what information search committee members are seeking in asking the question. This practice will often lead to refining and improving the question. It will also help build a shared understanding and investment, among search committee, for the process.