

Course Overview

Welcome! This course was created especially for university teachers like you in refugee and displaced person (RDP) contexts. Teaching and working with young people in higher education can be intellectually rewarding. In the trauma, conflict, or displacement context, your role as a teacher might extend beyond delivering academic content. Under these circumstances, the classroom tends to evolve into more than just a space for teaching and learning — it requires that you facilitate an environment that is psychologically safe, culturally responsive, and inclusive. This makes the classroom conducive to learning.



The course is founded on the social-emotional learning (SEL) framework. Although the model originated in school-based intervention practices, social-emotional learning (SEL) has received increasing attention in higher education in recent years. This practice has been praised as “a transformative educational paradigm that prioritises the development of emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and reflective practices alongside cognitive and academic competencies” (Mukhemar et al., 2025, p. 1). This is important for higher education teachers to understand. Research indicates that teachers’ emotional well-being has a direct impact on the classroom climate and learning outcomes (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Considering your extended role as a teacher, the truth is: you cannot pour from an empty cup. As the popular Latin motto goes: *nemo dat quod non habet!* In other words, you cannot pass on to someone else something you yourself do not possess. So, your own well-being matters just as much as the well-being of your students. Prioritising your own well-being means you are not only strengthening your resilience, but you are also enhancing student engagement, retention and success (Gallagher & Stocker, 2018).

Purpose and Nature of the Course

Teaching in higher education is an all-consuming and emotionally demanding profession. This course has been designed to support you in taking care of your social-emotional needs, a crucial element in your role as a university teacher. Drawing on the SEL framework, as well as from trauma-informed pedagogy adapted for higher education (Davidson, 2024), you will learn critical skills and strategies to manage the psycho-emotional demands of teaching, which will enable you to model SEL competencies for your students. As depicted in the diagram below, the CASEL framework advances five different but interrelated competencies through which “all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (CASEL, 2025). These are: 1) Self-awareness; 2) Self-management; 3) Social-awareness; 4) Relationship skills and 5) Responsible decision-making.



<https://casel.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/casel-wheel.png>