

Annex I. Common Focus Group Guide and Observation Sheet

A. Focus Group Guide

A common semi-structured guide was collaboratively developed by the research teams from the three participating universities to ensure methodological consistency and comparability across sites. The guide was organised around the project's three analytical dimensions: (A) perceptions of diversity and discrimination, (B) change agencies, and (C) perceptions of institutional change. Within each theme, open-ended prompts invited participants to share experiences, perceptions of their institutional context, and suggestions for improvement.

Table 1

Structure of the Common Focus Group Guide

Dimension	Core Topics	Sample Prompts
A. Perceptions of Diversity and Discrimination	Meanings and experiences of diversity; perceived inequalities; inclusion climate.	How would you describe diversity at your university? / Have you ever witnessed or experienced situations that felt exclusionary or discriminatory?
B. Change Agencies	Individual and collective initiatives; perceived efficacy; institutional support.	What kinds of actions or initiatives promote inclusion in your context? / Who usually takes the lead in fostering change?
C. Perceptions of Institutional Change	Barriers, drivers, and examples of institutional change.	Do you think your university has changed in recent years regarding inclusion? / What obstacles make it difficult to promote change?

Each focus group began with an ice-breaker to establish rapport and clarify confidentiality principles, followed by thematic blocks guided by these questions. The moderator ensured balanced participation and thematic coverage while remaining flexible to explore emerging issues.

All sessions were audio-recorded in full, with prior written consent from participants, to ensure accuracy in transcription and subsequent analysis. Moderators used the same introduction and closure script, which included information on the study purpose, voluntary participation, and data protection procedures.

B. Observation Sheet

To complement the transcribed discussions, a standardised observation protocol was used by a second researcher during each session to document contextual and

interactional aspects. This sheet, adapted from Wong (2008), captured non-verbal dynamics, group atmosphere, and situational details relevant for interpretive analysis.

Table 2
Observation Dimensions and Descriptors

Point of Observation	Description
1. Dynamics of the meeting	Describe the level and tone of participation (e.g., fluid, participative, reticent, hermetic, uncomfortable). Note reactions to discussion topics—reticence, openness, awkwardness, normality, etc.
2. Interlocution patterns	Identify roles in discourse (e.g., participants leading the discussion, expressing discomfort, or showing deference). Indicate whether dominant voices or silenced positions emerged.
3. Points of convergence	Summarise any shared or consensual positions within the group.
4. Points of divergence	Summarise key disagreements, tensions, or alternative perspectives.
5. Physical setting	Describe the environment (size, layout, lighting, comfort). Include contextual notes that may influence interaction (e.g., interruptions, spatial constraints).
6. Group distribution	Sketch a simple seating map indicating participant arrangement and numbering for reference in field notes.

Note. Adapted from Wong (2008).

Observers were instructed to remain non-intrusive and record descriptive rather than interpretive comments during the session. Immediately after each focus group, the moderator and observer completed a joint debriefing note to integrate their impressions before formal transcription and coding.

Audio recordings were then transcribed verbatim in the original language and analysed within the shared coding framework. All recordings were permanently deleted after transcription and anonymisation, in compliance with GDPR requirements and institutional ethical guidelines.