

Unit Equity Committees—General Terms of Reference

Purpose/Mandate

Unit Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committees are ad hoc or standing committees dedicated to promoting and advancing upholding the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the unit, faculty and university. Based in the foundational knowledge that diversity underpins excellence, and that we all share responsibility for creating an equitable, diverse and inclusive community, the committees work to create and maintain an atmosphere of inclusion and respect in a safe and nurturing environment. Committees work to identify and address issues of social justice encompassing but not limited to Indigenous rights, the rights of members of groups that commonly experience discrimination due to race, ancestry, colour, religion and/or spiritual beliefs, age, class, or place of origin; rights of persons with visible and/or invisible (physical and/or mental) disabilities; rights of persons who identify as women; and rights of persons of marginalized sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Recognizing that many of these identities intersect and that therefore, equity, diversity and inclusion can be complex, committees, through their work, seek to value the contributions that each person brings, and are committed to ensuring full and equal participation for all in our community.

In this document, the term “unit” refers to whichever administrative structure supports the equity committee, whether it is a department, faculty, or other administrative unit.

Committee Structure and Members

- Members appointed or (if volunteers) approved by the unit head, Director, Chair, or Dean in non-departmentalized faculties
- Members include at least one continuing employee or regular faculty, as well as willing members from other groups of the university community as identified by the unit (e.g., term employees, sessional faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students)
- The committee will strive for diversity of membership by gender, ethnicity/ place of origin, Indigenous status, and many other aspects of identity. For more guidance on this, see the document “Creating and working well with diverse committees,” Appendix 2 in the [Guide to Faculty and Librarian Recruitment](#)
- The unit will look at ways to compensate members for participation when this work falls outside their paid work
- The committee size can range from 2-10+ members

Advisory Role

- The committee reports at least annually to the unit head, Director, Chair, or Dean in non-departmentalized faculties on its activities and recommendations
- The committee advises the unit head, Director, Chair, or Dean in non-departmentalized faculties on equity issues and possibilities within the unit
- The unit head, Director, Chair, or Dean in non-departmentalized faculties responds to the report and advice
- The committee may report regularly at unit meetings

Functioning of the Committee

- The committee will develop terms of reference identifying membership, when they meet, how they make decisions (including revisions to the terms of reference), how they seek diverse input, and how they ensure confidentiality
- The committee will normally establish an annual work plan identifying their major areas of work and priorities
- While the purpose of these committees is not to hear complaints or disclosures, we recognize that given their work, they may be approached as individuals or as a committee by community members with concerns or disclosures related to discrimination, harassment or sexualized violence. Given this, we recommend the following:
 - The primary response to concerns is a trauma-informed referral to an appropriate office. Training on providing such referrals is provided by the sexualized violence resource office in EQHR.
 - Resources on making referrals are found on [EQHR's website](#) and on the university's [Sexualized Violence webpage](#).
 - For minor matters that can be addressed internally, committee members or the committee will inform the unit head and see if they will address the concern themselves or ask the committee to do this.
 - The committee will not discuss concerns, complaints or disclosures that are brought forward. If they address any matter internally on request of the chair, the discussion will be only about the actions to be taken. In these cases, the committee will keep sufficient notes to clarify what the unit head asked them to do and what actions were taken by whom, but not further details. No names or identifying details will be recorded.
- The committee will continue to advance their own learning about equity, diversity and inclusion topics, including university policies, offices and resources, about the experiences of diverse populations, and relevant topics such as policies on confidentiality, etc.

Areas of Work

Some common activities that equity committees engage in include:

- **General:** Support equity, diversity, inclusion, Indigenization, reconciliation, respect, and healthy work and learning environments.
- **Advisory:** Advise on issues, needs and opportunities to advance equity, diversity and inclusion.
- **Advocacy:** Advocate for equity and inclusion with respect to the curriculum, the learning environment, the teaching experience, and other aspects of the unit's work.
- **Education:** Identify educational needs and invite/organize learning opportunities. Possible topics include bias-free hiring and fair assessment and decision-making (including for ARPT committees); sexualized violence; race and racism; Indigenization and reconciliation; the need for and positive impacts of diversity along with the negative impacts of lack of diversity; accommodation, disability, and universal design.
- **Curriculum:** Review and make recommendations about the curriculum to address equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization.

- **TRC and Indigenization:** Consider and make recommendations on ways to advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and Indigenization of the work and curriculum of the unit.
- **Goals and reporting:** Review data and recommend diversity hiring and retention goals for a unit and review and report on progress; report annually to unit members.
- **Student body:** Review information on diversification of the student body and their experiences; provide advice on how to meet equity, diversity and inclusion needs for all levels of students.
- **Staff and Faculty:** Review information on diversity, needs and experiences of staff and faculty; recommend ways to promote equity for marginalized staff and faculty and ways to promote retention and advancement of underrepresented staff and faculty.
- (this is noted under additional areas of work below)**Events:** Organize events to promote equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization.
- **Outreach:** Liaise or connect with other units or people on equity, diversity and inclusion-related initiatives.

Additional areas of work committees may want to attend to

- How to engage all unit members in equity learning and work
- Support for students
- Climate surveys or outreach/events to assess needs. These need to be supported by the administrators with plans for response and follow-up actions to address any concerns that may be raised
- Responding to smaller concerns raised to avoid escalation and resolve at a local level
- Education and programs to address all levels of discrimination: individual beliefs and actions; macro-level discrimination (racism, white supremacy); and meta forces (colonialism)