

OISE/UT Policy on Equity and Diversity

Introduction

OISE/UT is strongly committed to social justice in everything it does. This means that we are committed to the just treatment of each individual member of our community and the communities we serve. It also means that we are especially vigilant to ensure that differences are not treated in ways that produce direct or indirect forms of discrimination.¹ Our commitment to social justice also means that those with whom we work and live who experience individual or systemic discrimination, for whatever reason, are provided with the means to overcome social and physical disadvantages, to the best of our ability. These commitments are captured in two broad principles:

1. *Who we are and what we do will reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.*
2. *Everyone in our community and the communities we serve will be treated Equitably.²*

As an institution we will work to ensure an environment where students, faculty and staff are given the support needed to realize their goals and aspirations. We strive to remove the barriers that prevent historically disadvantaged groups from realizing their full potential. Through continual examination and monitoring of our practices, policies and programs we will aim to ensure that equitable principles prevail. Furthermore, we believe that OISE/UT has the responsibility to be a voice for issues of equity and diversity in the wider community. Our two broad equity principles are aimed at fulfilling our responsibility to create the equality of opportunities and outcomes enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the *Federal Contractors Equity Program*, and the University of Toronto policies and practices related to equity and discrimination.

The Principles Applied To Internal OISE/UT Administration

The sources and nature of the ‘equity and diversity’ issues with which we are grappling are complex and multi-layered. Equity must be evident throughout all institutional practices - across all communities within OISE/UT and at every level of engagement (recruitment, admissions/hiring, retention, evaluation/completion, and promotion). Equity practices will be measured, acknowledged and rewarded. In practice, ensuring equitable administrative processes requires substantial, accessible resources (human and material). Professional development for all is critical for the implementation of processes which help ensure equity, and this professional development will be supported with time, money, space and acknowledgement.

¹ These differences have been named, for example, by the Ontario Human Rights code and include: Aboriginal ancestry, race, colour, culture, ethnicity, language, ability, disability, class, age, ancestry, nationality, place or origin, faith, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, sex or family status, marital status, gender identity. Although we have named differences by using the terminology of the Ontario Human Rights Code, we understand that this terminology is often contested and in flux.

² It should be understood that equitable treatment sometimes involves similar treatment and at other times involves differential treatment in order to bring about an equality of results.

To further ensure that social justice prevails in our administrative practices, we aim to:

- better coordinate the rich equity expertise that already exists (e.g., develop a database of human resources and materials);
- increase our efforts to acknowledge and address systemic discrimination;
- maintain and continue to develop proactive processes to promote equity practices and monitor their success;
- use equity and diversity as criteria for the evaluation and support of our research centers and community programs;
- develop and implement a process for resolving incidents/issues after they have occurred;
- develop and implement monitoring and evaluation processes to verify the application of the guiding principles;
- promote rewards for teaching and continuing research that reflect equitable practice;
- in collaboration with other University of Toronto offices, strive to implement anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies and practices;
- ensure that the implementation of these goals be incorporated into the portfolio of one of the deans at OISE/UT;
- maintain and develop mechanisms to counsel and support individuals in matters of equity and diversity.

The Principles Applied To OISE/UT's Research Program

While the goals of OISE/UT's research is highly varied, touching on a broad spectrum of educational questions in many different contexts, our commitments to equity and diversity imply that faculty, staff and students should acknowledge the implications their research has for social justice goals.

To reflect the principles, OISE/UT's research program will aim to accomplish four goals:

- conduct a significant proportion of research to explore the issues of equity in the diverse educational contexts that we study;
- to give back (knowledge, skills, resources) to the communities who have participated in our research ;
- provide institutional support for faculty, staff and students to help them become better informed about existing resources for conducting and disseminating research which reflects our principles of equity and diversity. For example, OISE/UT should aim to make more widely available to faculty, staff and students professional development opportunities in research methods for equity and diversity;
- acknowledge the implications and limitations of research for diverse contexts and groups.

The Principles Applied To OISE/UT's Preservice, Continuing Education and Graduate Instruction

OISE/UT admits significant numbers of Preservice, Graduate and Continuing Education students each year. As such, it is one of the principal sites where education about diversity and equity issues are addressed. Through our teaching OISE/UT has immediate and direct effects on the ongoing work of students.

To further ensure that social justice prevails in our programs we will aim to:

- enrol and support a student body that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve through, for example, processes for student recruitment, selection, admission and subsequent support and accommodations;
- ensure that social justice is promoted in all areas of our curriculum, in our pedagogy,
- in the climate of our classrooms, and in all aspects of the OISE/UT environment;
- hire and support individuals who have a demonstrated commitment and capacity to realize our social justice goals through their work and community involvement.

The Principles Applied To Our Field Development/Community Outreach Programs

OISE/UT faculty, staff and students belong to diverse communities defined in a variety of ways (see footnote 1, on page 1). We engage in significant amounts of work with members of many different constituencies that have educational responsibilities and interests (schools, places of work, hospitals, community organizations, NGOs, advocacy groups, etc.). While this work often is related to our research in one form or another, it typically has quite practical purposes – the direct or indirect improvement of teaching and learning. Such work takes us beyond our own institution and provides opportunities to fulfill our obligation to promote social justice in a much wider context. Our work with community partners should aim:

- to respect diversity and the importance of social justice;
- to promote equitable outcomes for diverse groups;
- to be based on relationships that are ethical, collaborative, and reciprocal in nature.

Programs and resources within OISE/UT that promote these goals deserve special attention and protection. The principles of equity and diversity should be major criteria for assessing the value of centres. Such significant resources are essential to accomplish our community outreach goals.