

IRES Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (DEDI) Committee Terms of Reference

Purpose and Mandate

The IRES DEDI Committee was formed in 2023 to provide advice, strategic planning, and coordination to advance efforts towards equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization* in IRES. This mandate includes all aspects of the unit's teaching and learning, research, culture, and operations. Its overarching goal is to foster an inclusive, equitable, accessible, and respectful environment for learning, scholarship, and engagement, where all members of IRES feel a sense of belonging and thrive. We also recognize that these issues often extend beyond our institute and require engagement with broader issues over long timespans. As such, we see an important part of our mission as not only to support and uphold equity principles in our work environment, but also to work proactively to advance DEDI goals in our broader scholarly communities (e.g., diversity in related fields of knowledge, advancing the work of BIPOC scholars, and including historically underrepresented knowledges and similar efforts consistent with DEDI principles). An overarching mission is to address DEDI issues around (but not limited to) race, Indigeneity, gender, sexual orientation, age, neurodiversity, language, ability, religion, and their intersections that impact faculty, staff, and students of the IRES community. These efforts are aligned with an aim to advance, UBC's [Strategic Plan](#), [Inclusion Action Plan](#), [Indigenous Strategic Plan](#), and [Strategic Equity and Anti-Racism Framework](#).

**Please see our definitions and explanations of language choices in this committee name and mandate in the Appendix of this Terms of Reference document.*

Committee Objectives

- Consult with stakeholders which may include, but are not limited to, IRES students, faculty, postdocs, and staff to identify strategic issues and areas of needed change in relation to DEDI;
- Provide guidance to the Director on the development, implementation and review of IRES DEDI policies, processes, and initiatives;
- Provide advice, guidance, and implementation support for collection and analysis of DEDI related data;
- Develop an action plan to realize the Committee's purpose, including a set of activities and the identification of relevant stakeholders who will participate in the plan's implementation;
- Initiate and coordinate projects, initiatives, and activities that advance the abovementioned action plan;
- Provide advice, guidance, and implementation support for the recommendations of the UBC Inclusion Action Plan, Indigenous Strategic Plan, and Strategic Equity and Anti-Racism Framework at the departmental level

- Coordinate with DEDI initiatives and activities at other departments, and at the Faculty of Science and University level

Committee Membership

The Committee will be chaired by a faculty member, appointed by the IRES Director. In addition to the Chair, there will be at least one, and up to two additional faculty representatives, also appointed by the IRES Director. There will be at least one Staff Representative, appointed by the IRES Director of Administration and Operations. There will be at least one, and up to three student representatives, ideally representing different program levels and degree progression stages. Recognizing that committee service is beyond the scope of typical graduate student responsibilities, student representatives will receive a small honorarium. There will be up to two postdoctoral/research associate representatives. Student, postdoctoral and research associate representatives will be appointed by the DEDI Committee Chair. Members will hold these positions for one year. To maintain continuity, there will be at least one continuing faculty or staff member of the committee across years.

Roles and Responsibilities

Chair

- Coordinate the committee's activities and oversee its mandate and purpose
- Create a safe space at committee meetings for respectful and productive discussion of DEDI matters where all voices and perspectives feel welcome
- Plan committee meetings and decide on the meeting agenda
- Liaise with IRES Director and Director of Administration and Operations
- Oversee the creation of a list of priorities, goals, and objectives at the end of each term for the upcoming term of the committee, in consultation with all other committee members

Faculty Representatives

- Attend meetings
- Review and provide feedback on documents and plans as requested, outside of meetings
- Solicit input from their IRES community constituency
- Contribute to implementation of committee activities outside of meetings
- Contribute to benchmarking review, data collection, and analysis outside of meetings

Staff Representative

- Attend meetings

- Review and provide feedback on documents and plans as requested, outside of meetings
- Solicit input from their IRES community constituency
- Contribute to implementation, as time and capacity allow
- Contribute to benchmarking review, data collection, and analysis, as time and capacity allow

Student and Postdoctoral/Research Associate Representatives

- Attend meetings
- Review and provide feedback on documents and plans as requested, outside of meetings
- Solicit input from their IRES community constituency
- Contribute to implementation, as time and capacity allow
- Contribute to benchmarking review, data collection, and analysis, as time and capacity allow

Meeting Schedule and Term

The Committee will aim to meet monthly. The Chair may call ad hoc meetings, if required. Smaller working groups of committee members may be formed to work on specific committee tasks. The Committee's term is from July-June.

Appendix

Here, we define our working understandings of the terms decolonization, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and explain why these terms were chosen for the mandate of this committee.

- **Decolonization** is an action word, and it makes explicit colonialism and Western ways of knowing and being that undergird modern academic institutions and practices.
 - Decolonization is not a metaphor, but it's also not only about the return of land. It also involves reclaiming non-Western values, epistemologies, and ways of life.
 - Action taken by non-Indigenous peoples.
 - Asking for [a paradigm shift](#) toward simultaneous attention to ceding space to Indigenous persons as well as Indigenous knowledges, histories, epistemologies, etc.

- Murray Sinclair (Ojibway) has said in the context of Indian Residential Schools in Canada, “education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of this mess” (The National, 2015).
- Benefits of this term: According to York U, it’s foundational to the work of EDI. It’s also about intentionally taking steps to undo colonialism, offering transparency and clarity to orient and create space to wrestle with this difficult process at IRES and in our work.

Table adapted from Dafina-Lazarus Stewart’s Language of Appeasement (see [article](#))

The first two columns are from the article. The third column is an attempt to bring decolonization into the conversation.

Diversity asks, “Who’s in the room?”	Equity responds, “Who is trying to get in the room but can’t? Whose presence in the room is under constant threat of erasure?”	Decolonization questions, “Why is there a room? What are the terms for room entry and exit, and who set them?”
Inclusion asks, “Has everyone’s ideas been heard?”	Justice responds, “Whose ideas won’t be taken as seriously because they aren’t in the majority?”	Decolonization questions, “What are the institutionalized norms that devalue or erase Indigenous ways of knowing? What structures can we change to guarantee their ideas are heard and equally valued?”
Diversity asks, “How many more of [pick any minoritized identity] group do we have this year than last?”	Equity responds, “What conditions have we created that maintain certain groups as the perpetual majority here?”	Decolonization questions, “How can we dismantle the structures that limit minorities to be well represented in the group? + Praxis”
Inclusion asks, “Is this environment safe for everyone to feel like they belong?”	Justice challenges, “Whose safety is being sacrificed and minimized to allow others to be comfortable	Decolonization questions, “What systemic changes, what actions can we do to guarantee a safe

	maintaining dehumanizing views?”	environment for everyone? + Praxis”
Diversity asks, “Isn’t it separatist to provide funding for safe spaces and separate student centers?”	Equity answers, “What are people experiencing on campus that they don’t feel safe when isolated and separated from others like themselves?”	Decolonization recognizes, “Colonization has actively intimidated minorities and denied them funding. Decolonization takes action to actively fund and provide safe spaces to minorities to reverse this trend”
Inclusion asks, “Wouldn’t it be a great program to have a panel debate Black Lives Matter? We had a Black Lives Matter activist here last semester, so this semester we should invite someone from the alt-right.”	Justice answers, “Why would we allow the humanity and dignity of people or our students to be the subject of debate or the target of harassment and hate speech?”	Decolonization recognizes, “Colonization has actively oppressed and limited the free speech of racialized people. Decolonization takes action to amplify racialized people’s voices and provide a safe space to reverse this trend.”

Diversity celebrates increases in numbers that still reflect minoritized status on campus and incremental growth.	Inclusion celebrates awards for initiatives and credits itself for having a diverse candidate pool.
Equity celebrates reductions in harm, revisions to abusive systems and increases in supports for people’s life chances as reported by those who have been targeted.	Justice celebrates getting rid of practices and policies that were having disparate impacts on minoritized groups.
Decolonization celebrates the reclaiming of Indigenous/non-Western values, epistemologies, and ways of life; and the eradication of colonial violence through structural change and cognitive liberation.	

References

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