Unit Equity Committees—General Terms of Reference

Purpose/mandate

Unit equity committees are standing committees dedicated to promoting, advancing and integrating the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the unit, faculty, and university and supporting the university's [Equity Action Plan](#).

The term "unit" refers to whichever administrative structure supports the equity committee, whether it is a department, faculty or other administrative unit.

As you start—and regularly throughout your work--consider the bigger picture:

- Who are we? (And: Who are we not? How did we end up on this committee? Who do we represent and not represent? What responsibilities does this bring?)
- How do we do our work? (How do we engage with our principles and values? How do we decide what to do and what to leave? How do we treat each other and those we serve?)
- What is our role? (Who gives us our mandate? Who are we responsible for and to? What do we do, and what do we not do—and why?)
- What else is possible? (What else can we imagine? What else ought to happen? Who else could be involved?)

Committee structure and members

- Members appointed or (if volunteers) approved by the unit head
- Members include at least one regular faculty or staff member, as well as willing members from other groups of the university community as identified by the unit (e.g., sessional faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students)
- The committee will strive for diversity of membership by gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, Indigenous identity, racial and/or ethnocultural identity, and religious and/or spiritual identity, as well as members holding varied levels of administrative power.
- Seek to compensate members when this work falls outside their paid work
  - e.g., compensate students with an honorarium of $30/hour
- Committee size can range from 2-10+ members
- Faculty-level equity committees generally include a representative from each departmental or school equity committee.
- Unit head is encouraged to meet with the equity committee a minimum of once a year but may meet with them more often

Advisory role

- Report at least annually to the Unit head on activities and recommendations related to the Equity Action Plan and/or other equity work
- May report regularly at unit meetings or bring items up for consultation
- Advise the Unit head on equity concerns and possibilities within the unit
- Unit head responds to reports and advice

- Faculty-level equity committees are under the leadership of the respective Dean and work with them to determine which activities to undertake. Activities may include:
  - Serving as a point of connection and mutual support for departmental and school equity committees
  - Amplifying departmental initiatives to a wider audience
  - Undertaking faculty-wide initiatives

Functioning of the committee

- Develop terms of reference identifying:
  - Name and mandate
  - Membership (see above) and membership terms. For example:
    - 2-year term for faculty and staff (renewable once)
    - 8-month term (Sep - Apr) for students (renewable once)
  - Meetings: How often, when and for how long they meet; virtual or in person
  - How they make decisions (including revisions to the terms of reference)
  - How they address power dynamics to ensure every member and their contributions are valued and engaged with
  - How they discuss and mitigate their own biases
  - How they seek diverse input beyond the committee
  - How they ensure confidentiality related to any engagements with unit members
  - How they advance their equity knowledge
  - Establishing a visible presence: website, email address, posters or other methods
- Establish an annual work plan identifying their major activities
  - Consider existing equity issues that have been raised in the unit
  - Seek input from diverse and marginalized members of the unit to understand and support their needs. Use non-tokenizing ways that don't add extra labour
  - Review the Equity Action Plan and work through the EAP Implementation Toolkit
- Advance their own learning about equity-related topics (e.g., Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Response Training; ICAT; Anti-Oppression Training)
- Explore the resources and work of other committees at UVic and connect and collaborate as appropriate (e.g., Office of the VP Indigenous; EQHR; Scarborough Charter Steering Committee; Accessibility committee; and other groups doing similar work)
- It is not the responsibility of committees to receive reports of discrimination, harassment and sexualized violence. At the same time, any individual may receive a disclosure of discrimination, harassment or sexualized violence and it is their responsibility to make a supportive referral to appropriate offices (i.e., EQHR, Sexualized Violence Resource Office, a leader with supervisory responsibilities). To support their ability to respond well to such disclosures:
  - Members will review the policies on Discrimination and Harassment and Sexualized Violence Prevention and take the training courses associated with these policies; we encourage them to take the course Engaging in Trauma Informed Practice to learn how to receive a disclosure and make a supportive referral.
  - They will not record names or identifying details about people who bring up concerns.

     o   For minor matters (e.g., administrative or procedural questions) that can be addressed internally, committee can always consult with EQHR for advice, as well as consult with the unit head to see if they can coordinate a response.

Areas of work

Some common activities that equity committees engage in include:

- **General:** Contribute to advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, Indigenization, reconciliation, respect, and healthy work and learning environments.
- **Advisory:** Advise on systemic problems, needs, and opportunities to advance equity, diversity and inclusion.
- **Advocacy:** Advocate for equity with respect to the curriculum, the learning environment, and the experience of varied groups in the unit (staff, faculty, students, grad students, post-docs).
- **Education:** Identify educational needs related to equity and organize learning opportunities.
- **Curriculum:** Review and make recommendations about the curriculum to address equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigenization.
- **Indigenous Plan:** Consider and make recommendations on ways to advance the Indigenous Plan.
- **Goals and reporting:** Review equity data and recommend diversity hiring and retention goals for a unit; review and report on progress.
- **Student body:** Review data on the student body; provide advice on how to meet equity, diversity and inclusion needs for all students; explore outreach to encourage diversification of student body (e.g., through connecting with student recruitment office).
- **Faculty:** Review information on diversity, needs and experiences of faculty; recommend ways to promote equity for marginalized faculty and ways to promote retention and advancement of underrepresented faculty.
- **Staff:** Identify and take action on inequities in the staff environment and experience; improve equity in hiring and retention.
- **Climate:** Develop activities that remove barriers to and foster an inclusive, welcoming climate.
- **Outreach:** Liaise or connect with other units or people on equity, diversity and inclusion-related initiatives.
- **Assessment**: Many equity committees want to assess the experiences of members of their unit or committee. UVic has a number of processes and policies in place that guide such research so that we follow legislation, prevent harm, and conduct meaningful assessment. To learn more about the options and parameters for such surveys, we encourage connecting with EQHR first (email betterdata@uvic.ca) to learn what kind of assessments are being done at the institutional level. You can also explore and what privacy and confidentiality requirements exist at UVic for surveys and ensure you've met your unit's requirements for human subjects reviews.