



ACTIVATING INCLUSION TOOLKIT

Building Your Planning Team

This tool is designed to help UBC units (departments, faculties, and divisions) form effective committees or working groups to guide their efforts in implementing UBC's Inclusion Action Plan or other equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) efforts. After using this tool, units will have a draft Terms of Reference document to support their planning team.

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Overview

Planning and implementation of strategic EDI initiatives, like any organizational change work, is most effective when guided by a group of committed individuals with diverse perspectives, expertise, and influence.

Creating a committee or working group to support your strategic EDI efforts can help broaden support for your work to advance inclusion and can improve decision-making by ensuring that a diversity of viewpoints are considered when decisions are made.

EDI committees can:

- Bring together a valuable range of skills, knowledge, and expertise for advancing EDI;
- Help to break down organizational silos; and
- Help maintain intentionality and accountability for EDI initiatives (Williams, 2014).

Depending on existing organizational structures within your unit, you may decide to re-task a current committee to focus on these efforts, or to create a small coordinating committee and use existing committee structures to undertake various aspects of the work.

If your unit does not have a suitable committee already in existence, you can use this tool to help guide your thinking as you design a terms of reference for your planning team.

Terms of Reference: General Tips

An effective committee is guided by a strong terms of reference document that clarifies why and how the committee's work will be done. The terms of reference sets expectations among committee members, as well as for others with an interest in the work of the committee. It can also be helpful to support continuity and organizational memory around the goals and intentions of the committee.

The terms of reference template (below) is designed to support your thinking as you create the team that will lead your unit's strategic EDI efforts.

When drafting your terms of reference, consider the following guidelines:

- Engage committee members in defining the terms of reference in order to reflect committee needs and create a sense of ownership.
- Use clear language to enable everyone, including those less familiar with university systems and structures, to understand the document. Avoid jargon.
- Use enough detail to provide clarity on what is intended, but allow space for flexibility as the committee is likely to evolve over time.
- Remember that not all aspects of a committee's processes and practices can be captured in a terms of reference document. Power dynamics and cultural norms will influence the committee's ways of working as well.
- EDI work can elicit strong emotions that will also influence how people participate in the committee. Leave space in your Terms of Reference for the human side of this work.

Next Steps

After creating your terms of reference, you should have a blueprint for getting your planning team up and running. The next step is to begin activities that will move the committee's mandate forward. Many of the tools in the Activating Inclusion Toolkit are designed to be used by a small committee or working group.

References

UBC Equity & Inclusion Office (2020). [EDI Committees: Getting Started Guide](#).

Williams, D. A. (2013). Strategic diversity leadership: Activating change and transformation in higher education. Fairfax, VA: Stylus.

Terms of Reference Template

Area	Questions to Consider
<p>Committee purpose mandate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the committee intended to specifically respond to needs and opportunities identified in UBC’s Inclusion Action Plan, or does it have a broader remit to advance inclusion? ▪ Will the committee focus on students, faculty, staff, or a combination? ▪ Is the committee focused strictly on planning how the unit will advance inclusion or will it also be tasked with leading implementation of initiatives? ▪ Is the committee’s purpose advisory or is initiating changes part of its mandate? ▪ How are equity, diversity, and inclusion defined in the context of the unit and how does this relate to the committee’s scope?
<p>Membership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who are the members of the committee? Are they selected or do they volunteer for the position? ▪ How will the committee ensure that its membership includes those with sufficient authority and influence within the unit to fulfill the committee’s mandate? ▪ How will the committee ensure adequate diversity—in terms of skill, knowledge, lived experiences and organizational position—among the its membership? ▪ How will committee members be recognized or compensated for their work? Are different procedures needed for students, faculty and staff in different employee groups?

Area	Questions to Consider
<p>Processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who is responsible for scheduling meetings, taking minutes, and other logistical tasks? ▪ How will agendas be developed? ▪ How often will the committee meet? What steps will be taken to ensure that committee members keep space in their calendars to attend the meetings? ▪ How will the committee make decisions—by vote, consensus, or another method? ▪ How will the committee ensure that its processes are equitable? For example, how do its processes compensate for the common tendency of EDI work to fall disproportionately on people from historically, persistently or systemically marginalized communities? ▪ Understanding that EDI work can elicit strong emotions, how do the committee’s processes address conflict as it emerges in the regular functioning of the committee?
<p>Accountability and reporting structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who is the “executive sponsor” of the committee—the person with a leadership role within the unit, who is a champion for the committee’s work and can support the committee in identifying resources and pathways for their work? Will that person chair the committee? ▪ How does the committee keep other leaders and the unit more broadly informed of its progress? ▪ What is the relationship of the committee to other groups or bodies within and outside of the unit, such as management teams, advisory committees, curriculum committee, or other working groups? How will they communicate and collaborate when appropriate? ▪ Can the committee make <i>decisions</i> about the direction of EDI work in the unit, or does it make <i>recommendations</i> to another person or body (such as a dean or a management team)? ▪ What are the timelines for the committee to provide updates on its work?
<p>Review and amendments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How often will membership on the committee be reviewed? Do members serve for a set period of time? ▪ How will the committee and other key leaders review the Terms of Reference in light of the changing landscape of EDI in the unit and at UBC, and make adjustments if necessary?