

UBC Equity & Inclusion Office
Sponsorship of Campus Community-Led Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives

The Purpose of the Equity & Inclusion Office

The purpose of the Equity & Inclusion Office (EIO) is to foster inclusive learning and working environments where human rights are respected, UBC community members are treated with dignity, and all students, faculty, and staff enjoy equitable access and opportunities to fully participate in and thrive in the life and work of the university. This purpose is pursued in a manner that serves the academic mission of the university. The EIO's programming is aligned to relevant university policies (e.g., academic freedom, discrimination, and employment equity policies for example) as well as relevant Canadian legislation (e.g., Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, BC Human Rights Code, and Employment Equity Act for example). The EIO's programming is also grounded in UBC's vision, mission and values:

UBC Vision: Inspiring people, ideas, and actions for a better world.

UBC Purpose: Pursuing excellence in research, learning, and engagement to foster global citizenship and advance a sustainable and just society across British Columbia, Canada, and the world.

UBC Values:

- **Excellence:** The aspiration to achieve outstanding quality in all endeavors.
- **Integrity:** Commitment to honesty, ethics, and truthfulness.
- **Respect:** Valuing diverse people, ideas, and actions.
- **Academic Freedom:** The right to express ideas and engage in open discussion without fear of censure.
- **Accountability:** Responsibility for our actions and fulfilling commitments.

Considerations for Sponsorship Decisions

To encourage UBC faculty, staff and students to join in advancing equity and inclusion priorities guided by UBC's Strategic Equity & Anti-Racism (StEAR) Framework, the EIO offers campus community members an opportunity to apply to the [StEAR Enhancement Fund](#). When considering requests for sponsorship of UBC community-led initiatives – whether through the StEAR Enhancement Fund or otherwise – the ability to affirm the following:

- That the initiative goals are aligned with the EIO's purpose.
- That the initiative organizers have reviewed and understand UBC's policies on academic freedom and its limits (summaries and links provided below).
- That the initiative organizers have reviewed and agree to promote adherence to UBC's Discrimination Policy and Respectful Environment Statement (summaries and links provided below).
- That the organizers agree to follow UBC's [event planning policies, including events with speakers](#) –
- That the organizers (whether using central, academic or Faculty owned spaces) agree to engage in an assessment of all guest speakers and develop safety plans as required, in alignment with UBC's [Space Management Policy](#) and as a requirement of the units under the purview of the Office of the Provost & Vice-President, Academic (which includes the Equity & Inclusion Office)
- That "space owners" will use the current [Event Risk Management Checklist](#) to conduct a preliminary assessment of the risk of the event and forward the assessment to Campus Security as required to allow for further assessment and safety planning if required.

Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom

Freedom of expression is a constitutional right that protects individuals from government interference when expressing their views. This right is crucial in a free and open society and should be protected. Respect for the value of freedom of expression and promotion of free inquiry are central to the university's mission.

Academic freedom, distinct from freedom of expression, is also a fundamental right unique to the academy, permitting members of the university to teach, learn and consider any opinion without non-academic constraints from the university administration.

Neither freedom of expression nor academic freedom are without limits. For example,

- Expression can be limited if found to rise to the level of hate, obscenity or discrimination, as set out by the Criminal Code and human rights laws; if it defames; or if it violates copyright law.
- Universities have legitimate academic expectations for its professors and students.

An important note:

Academic freedom is about the pursuit of knowledge, not ideology. When faculty members draw on their authority to speak, and especially when they claim "expertise," they have a special responsibility to tailor their claims to the evidence and to knowledge that comes from their training and scholarship.

Academic Freedom at UBC

Academic freedom policies vary between universities. The policy of each of UBC's campus Senates with respect to Academic Freedom is as follows:

- The members of the University enjoy certain rights and privileges essential to the fulfilment of its primary functions: instruction and the pursuit of knowledge. Central among these rights is the freedom, within the law, to pursue what seems to them as fruitful avenues of inquiry, to teach and to learn unhindered by external or non-academic constraints, and to engage in full and unrestricted consideration of any opinion.
- This freedom extends not only to the regular members of the University, but to all who are invited to participate in its forum. Suppression of this freedom, whether by institutions of the state, the officers of the University, or the actions of private individuals, would prevent the University from carrying out its primary functions.
- All members of the University must recognize this fundamental principle and must share responsibility for supporting, safeguarding and preserving this central freedom. Behaviour that obstructs free and full discussion, not only of ideas that are safe and accepted, but of those which may be unpopular or even abhorrent, vitally threatens the integrity of the University's forum. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated.

Vancouver and Okanagan policies can be found at the following links:

- <https://vancouver.calendar.ubc.ca/campus-wide-policies-and-regulations/academic-freedom/introduction>
- <https://okanagan.calendar.ubc.ca/campus-wide-policies-and-regulations/student-rights-and-responsibilities/academic-freedom>

UBC's Discrimination Policy

UBC's [Discrimination Policy \(SC7\)](#) flows from and is interpreted in a manner that is consistent with the [BC Human Rights Code](#). Section 4.4 of the Discrimination Policy includes a definition of discrimination:

- Discrimination is intentional or unintentional conduct, which can be individual or systemic, that imposes burdens, obligations, or disadvantages on or limits access to opportunities, benefits and advantages to specific individuals or groups as defined by the BC Human Rights Code and for which there is no bona fide and reasonable justification. Harassment that is related to one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination set out in the Human Rights Code is Discrimination under this Policy.

Discrimination can involve individuals or groups, and it can occur during one incident or over a series of incidents including single incidents, which, in isolation, would not necessarily constitute discrimination.

- It is the impact on the Complainant, subject to the reasonable person test, and not the intent of the Respondent that defines the treatment as Discrimination. The reasonable person test refers to an assessment of responsibility that takes into account not only what the Complainant and Respondent actually experienced, knew, or understood about one another or the situation, but also what a reasonable person in each of their circumstances would or ought to have experienced, known, or understood.

An important note:

The word "discrimination" can mean different things. For example, it may be used to refer to conduct that has been found to meet a formal legal test under the *Human Rights Code* or the Discrimination Policy. However, it may also be used to refer to conduct that a person believes is discriminatory without considering the formal legal test.

UBC's Respectful Environment Statement

Some behaviour may not qualify as discrimination under the *BC Human Rights Code* but can still be considered bullying or harassment, violating UBC's [Respectful Environment Statement](#). Bullying or harassment include unwanted, abusive, vexatious, or hostile behaviour that creates an intimidating environment. Some examples of bullying/harassment include:

- Demeaning or intimidating comments or gestures
- Verbal aggression or yelling
- Persistent exclusion or ostracism
- Abuse of power or authority
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Threats to employment or property

If linked to protected characteristics (e.g., race, religion, political belief), this behaviour may also violate UBC's Discrimination Policy. Exclusions:

- "Appropriate managerial or supervisory direction, constructive criticism, respectful differences of opinion, instructional techniques such as irony, conjecture, and refutation, or assigning readings or other instructional materials that advocate controversial positions, and single incidents of thoughtless, petty or foolish words or acts that cause fleeting harm do not constitute bullying or harassment." (UBC, RES)

An Important Note:

Impassioned expression does not necessarily equate to disrespect or discrimination – it may simply be strong disagreement regarding an issue of public interest.