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Educational Equity Policy Statement

Approved by Senate April 19, 2001

Queen's University is committed to developing a climate of educational equity that includes acknowledging and eliminating direct, indirect and systemic discrimination. A culture of educational equity recognizes and respects the equal dignity and worth of all who seek to participate in the life, work and mission of the University. Such a culture is created and maintained by developing a university-wide commitment to educational equity, supported by policies, programs, curricula, practices and traditions that facilitate individuals' free, safe and full participation.

see also " Report of the [Educational Equity Committee](#) to Senate April 19, 2001

maintained by University Secretariat
modified July 23, 2007

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EDUCATIONAL EQUITY REPORT AND POLICY STATEMENT SENATE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY COMMITTEE

Preamble

A number of committees, offices, and individuals have worked and are working to ensure that equity exists for the Queen's community. Some examples include the Queen's University Faculty Association (QUFA) and Queen's University whose collective agreement contains specific equity provisions; the Human Rights Office; the University Advisor on Equity; the Council on Employment Equity; the Aboriginal Student Centre; the Aboriginal Council; the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program; the Education Equity program in the Faculty of Law; the Office of Disability Services; the International Centre; the Alma Mater Society (AMS) Committee Against Racism and Ethnic Discrimination (RED); AMS Social Issues Commission projects; the AMS Accessibility Task Force and the Chaplain's Office. As well, several reports and studies have made recommendations concerning equity such as the *Access Study* (1993), the report of *Student Perceptions of Graduate Education at Queen's* (1993), and the report of the *Principal's Advisory Committee on Race Relations* (1991).

Despite the previous efforts of the Queen's community, however, no comprehensive policy dealing specifically with educational equity has been developed. Because of this situation, educational equity work at Queen's is often fragmented and the equity recommendations from reports and studies are sometimes overlooked. In order to create a focus on educational equity issues, Senate created the Senate Educational Equity Committee (SEEC) to assist the Queen's community in recognizing and addressing systemic barriers to educational equity experienced by some individuals and groups. In the spirit of this mandate, the SEEC has developed a policy to encourage an encompassing and diverse educational environment for all members of the Queen's community.

A. Policy Statement

Queen's University is committed to developing a climate of educational equity that includes acknowledging and eliminating direct, indirect and systemic discrimination. A culture of educational equity recognizes and respects the equal dignity and worth of all who seek to participate in the life, work and mission of the University. Such a culture is created and maintained by developing a university-wide commitment to educational equity, supported by policies, programs, curricula, practices and traditions that facilitate individuals' free, safe and full participation.

B. Definitions

i. Educational Equity: Equity in education is achieved when all members of our society have fair and equal opportunity to participate in and enjoy the benefits of an education, including the opportunity to experience success and human dignity while developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to contribute as leaders and citizens in their society.

Annotation: **Applying Equity in Education**

In accordance with our obligations under human rights legislation and Queen's policies, the scope of equity in education includes and is not limited to equity in access and benefits; curriculum and instruction materials and practices; assessment and evaluation materials and practices; inclusive education such as cross-cultural, intercultural, anti-racist, feminist and non-sexist; school culture and environment; student development; employment; leadership development; and organizational development and change.

Equal Treatment Does Not Mean the Same Treatment

The concept of equity goes beyond formal equality where everyone is treated the same, to fostering a barrier-free environment where individuals benefit equally. It recognizes that some people or groups of people may require additional and/or unique approaches in order to achieve equal benefit.

ii. Employment Equity: Employment equity is a voluntary or legislated program or set of activities designed to ensure that a workplace has equality for all of its employees and prospective employees in the areas of recruitment, hiring, remuneration, training, promotion, retention or dismissal.

Annotation: An Employment Equity program has three basic goals:

1. To achieve a workforce that reflects the diversity of the available labour force.
2. To ensure employment systems, policies and practices support the workforce as a whole and support the recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion of designated group members. (At Queen's these groups are defined under federal regulation to include women, Aboriginal peoples, members of visible minorities and persons with disabilities. The Queen's/QUFA collective agreement adds gay men and lesbians to the designated group member list.)

3. To ensure that all present and future employees have a fair and equitable opportunity to develop their abilities, realize their expectations and make the best contribution possible to the workplace.

Distinctions

While there is overlap in the concepts of educational and employment equity, an important difference occurs where these programs can operate effectively to create constructive change. Employment equity's focus is limited to the workplace and the institutional structures and jurisprudence that govern it. Educational equity in the university context encompasses all parts of the institution involved in the process of teaching and learning and their associated systems of governance. The SEEC's focus is on educational equity.

There are important relationships between the concepts of employment and educational equity. The cornerstone of employment equity is equitable access to education and training programs for all. This access is required to enable individuals to reach their full potential. Employment equity, in turn, is fundamental to fully achieving educational equity because it is central to the creation of a welcoming and supportive educational environment. Universities, therefore, have a key role to play as change agents in the achievement of equity in society.

iii. Curriculum: Curriculum encompasses all learning, both formal and informal in the educational setting. Formal learning happens through institutional content and methodology (pedagogy) and through official policies governing admissions, evaluations, standards, and accreditation. Informal learning occurs through the social and environmental contexts in which the learners find themselves.

Annotation: Over the past century, curriculum has ranged broadly in definition from meaning a particular plan for a course to including all learning experiences provided by schools. In recent studies focusing on curriculum in postsecondary settings, curriculum has been defined as encompassing "all the sectors of the institution involved with the process of teaching and learning" (Toombs & Tierney, 1995, p. 341). Rudolph (1977) noted that "curriculum cannot be understood without paying attention to all the elements that give it life—students, knowledge, teachers, and the courses where everything falls together or falls apart" (p. 2). In this context, the Queen's "Broader Learning Environment" becomes a key component.

iv. Diversity: Educational equity recognizes groups who have not been able to fully and equitably participate in postsecondary institutions due to systemic barriers.

Annotation: A climate that exists in an equitable setting recognizing diversity includes those designated groups from the Employment Equity Legislation (women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities) as well as the groups designated in Human Rights legislation (including individuals belonging to various faiths, sexual orientations, and social classes) as well as those groups recognized in institutional agreements. (Equity seeking groups is the term this

document will use henceforth to include all these various groups.)

v. Climate: Climate includes the effects of explicit, formally institutionalized policies, as well as the effects of a range of informal practices and implicit policies that, despite their relative subtlety and variability, and the fact that they may not be intended as such, contribute to the social and cultural conditions created within the environment.

vi. Environment: Environment includes the climate as well as the physical surroundings and the conditions of work or study present in the institution. This encompasses not only the buildings and facilities, but also the services available, including support services such as counselling, advisory, health, residences, libraries, media and technologies.

Annotation: The interaction of climate and other factors in the environment generally influence how successful an institution will be at attracting and retaining a diverse community reflecting Canadian society. Because of their relative invisibility, the informal practices influencing climate can be pervasive enough to erode the capacity of individuals to participate fully in academic settings and to undermine the institutional programs designed to promote equity. Although such practices may not be intended as harmful, they are often the major contributors to the systematic disadvantage of equity seeking groups. When they are created and maintained through a process of stereotyping, exclusion, and devaluation of people based on inherent characteristics, and serve to isolate and undermine individuals, even as formal barriers to their advancement have been eliminated, this forms the basis for discrimination and is commonly referred to as a 'chilly climate'. The cost of the effects of a chilly climate is borne by those who are marginalized in this way and do not have the opportunity to reach their full potential, as well as by the educational institutions and society which do not get to benefit from the talents and capabilities of everyone.

C: Processes

It is everyone's responsibility to contribute individually and professionally to the pursuit of equity within Queen's. Nevertheless, it is helpful to identify specific units within the University structure where primary leadership responsibility and accountability for enabling components of educational equity can be entrusted. Included in this section are resources that can foster equity at Queen's. Some of these resources currently exist while others have yet to be developed. Following the adoption of this report and policy, the SEEC will recommend additional resources and processes to Senate that will support educational equity at Queen's.

1. Admissions, Recruitment, and Financial Assistance

a. Primary Responsibility

- Office of the Registrar reporting to the Vice Principal Academic.
- Office of the University Advisor on Equity reporting directly to the Principal.
- Deans

b. Resources

- i. Diversity profiles of the incoming, current and future student population

- ii. Demographic data analysis from various sources of equity seeking groups
- iii. Outreach and recruitment strategies that encourage and support diverse student applications
- iv. Admissions systems that ensure equitable access and acceptance
- v. Programs that provide equitable access for diverse applicants who are academically qualified.

2. Climate and Environment

a. Primary Responsibility

- o Principal, Vice Principals and Deans
- o Departmental/Faculty Committees (graduate and undergraduate levels)
- o Directors/Deans of Services, including Student Managers and Directors (Residence and Housing/Food Services, Athletics, Career Services, Health Counselling and Disability Services, Human Resources, Instructional Development Centre, Information Technology Services, Equity and Human Rights Departments)
- o Directors/Managers responsible for Student-run services
- o Physical Plant Services
- o Campus Security

b. Resources

- i. Internal reviews and reports (Internal Academic Reviews, yearly reports)
- ii. Regular reviews or reports made, based on a series of key points (where applicable) that have been identified by North American postsecondary institutions as contributing to the environment. Such reports can act as a system review and thus assist in formulating plans toward improving the environment for a diverse population. These key points include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Faculty/administrators as role models (Employment equity monitoring)
 - 2. Critical mass re students. (Setting goals for student recruitment/presence)
 - 3. Academic support services within departments. (Programs for the retention of students for example: tutoring, mentoring programs, enrichment courses)
 - 4. Focused financial assistance and incentive programs
 - 5. Broadening of the curriculum. (Curriculum reviews)
 - 6. Clearly articulated academic requirements (Calendar descriptions)
 - 7. Physical accessibility of the location (Accessibility audits)
 - 8. Technological accessibility
 - 9. Broadening of pedagogical tools for both instructors and students
 - 10. The diversity of cultural perspective within University life (Orientation, social events, student activities and services, ceremonial events such as convocation, the scheduling of classes in consideration of religious holidays, etc.)
 - 11. The physical character of the environment.

Most of these points should be examined in the light of addressing common needs while taking into account the fact that some students/faculty/staff find themselves in a minority

situation.

3. Formal Curriculum

a. Primary Responsibility:

- Faculty, faculty boards, faculty program committees, hiring/appointment committees, department heads, VP Academic and deans, Senate, Human Resources (Orientation seminars)

b. Resources

- i. Teaching Award Bodies (Alma Mater Society, Instructional Development Centre, etc.)
- ii. Internal Academic Review (IAR)
- iii. Instructional Development Centre (IDC)
- iv. Human Rights Office
- v. QUEST Evaluations
- vi. Specific actions utilizing above resources could include, but are not limited to the following:
 1. Equity knowledge as a requirement for new appointments
 2. Introduction to equity resources (e.g. IDC) in orientation process for new faculty
 3. IDC workshops for developing an equitable curriculum
 4. More resources for and emphasis on the IDC
 5. Equitable curriculum measures built into reporting template for professors (QUFA)
 6. IDC and AMS awards for professors whose curricula show a strong equity focus
 7. Specific equity audit measures in IAR and QUEST evaluations.

4. Research

a. Primary Responsibility

- Deans, Graduate Coordinators, School of Graduate Studies, Office of Research Services, the Vice Principal Research, and General Research Ethics Board (GREB)

b. Resources

- i. Faculty and Unit reviews of graduate programs, admission criteria and recruitment strategies
- ii. Research Ethics Boards
- iii. Support structures for graduate students from underrepresented groups including assistance through grants, scholarships and bursaries; counseling services; language skills upgrading
- iv. Equity guidelines for the adjudication of research awards, for admission to graduate programs, and for graduate processes such as comprehensive exams and oral defenses
- v. Diversity of faculty members and research programs
- vi. Guidelines for equitable relationships between graduate students and supervisors and for Teaching and Research assistants

D: Ensuring Progress Toward Educational Equity

Monitoring

- All those responsible for educational equity report directly or indirectly to the Principal, whose leadership ensures the progress toward and monitoring of education equity at Queen's.
- The Vice-Principals' offices are responsible for monitoring progress from units who report to the VPs.
- Office of the University Advisor on Equity monitors progress of units' educational equity initiatives via the IAR process and workplace diversity via Queen's Employment Equity programme
- Educational Equity Committee reviews the progress and reports to Senate, making recommendations.
- Employment Council monitors issues of environment, climate, and communication.

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