



DEDI PART 2: EQUITY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

This Food for Thought is part of a special 4-part series exploring approaches to *Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion* (DEDI) in the context of teaching. We also encourage you to review [York University's full 2023-2028 DEDI Strategy](#), which includes key principles, approaches, and strategies for the classroom and beyond.

WHAT IS IT?

Equity, as defined in the York University DEDI Strategy, encompasses “fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement” (York University Decolonizing, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028, p. 9) for all members of the university community. It involves identifying and addressing systemic barriers that can hinder the success of individuals from underserved and underrepresented populations. The DEDI Strategy emphasizes the importance of promoting equity by ensuring equal access to resources, opportunities, and support, and by challenging systems, structures and practices that perpetuate inequities.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

By actively confronting inequities in the learning process, we can support the kind of inclusive and just learning environment that will positively impact student engagement, retention, and well-being. When we make these efforts transparent to students—by engaging them in conversations about equity and providing them also with the necessary tools to recognize and challenge systemic inequities—we can cultivate a collective commitment to equity that will have an impact not only in the classroom but beyond. This work benefits all members of the university community by supporting learning and work environments grounded in individual and institutional accountability.

HOW CAN INSTRUCTORS SUPPORT EQUITY IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?

1. **Identify and address unconscious bias:** We all have unconscious biases, and the impacts of these biases are amplified when we hold authority and power over others (i.e., in assessment, supervision etc.). By taking time to actively learn and reflect on [how biases can impact our work and interactions](#), and by providing students opportunities to do the same, educators can engage and support work in identifying and challenging harmful assumptions.
2. **Recognize barriers and offer resources:** An equity-informed lens acknowledges that students face different barriers inside and outside of the classroom. While external factors may fall outside the faculty's purview, you can support students, and particularly marginalized and vulnerable students, by being familiar with the [wide range of university supports and resources](#) available and raising awareness of these resources to their students. For example, including these resources on your syllabus, posting them on eClass can ensure your students can readily access them at any time.
3. **Acknowledge power and privilege:** Systems are made up of individuals. When we take time to reflect on our own positioning and the [intersections between the forms of power and privilege we hold](#) (both in terms of our formal roles and our social locations) we are better equipped to disrupt harmful power dynamics and be allies to those with less power.

4. **Understand and challenge microaggressions:** Microaggressions are subtle actions that communicate bias or prejudice towards historically marginalized groups. By taking time to [learn more about microaggressions](#) you can better understand their impact on the learning environment. And by [learning more about microinterventions](#) (strategies to challenge microaggressions) you can better prepare yourself to challenge prejudice when it occurs.
5. **Support systemic change:** While supporting equity at the classroom and interpersonal levels, we should acknowledge that many inequities are perpetuated by policies and procedures that are embedded on an institutional level. The task of changing systems can be overwhelming, but we can support this work by taking advantage of opportunities to impact change when they arise. While this can happen through active institutional engagement (ie., through committee work, course and program design etc.) we can also look for more everyday ways to support and build capacity for change (ie., providing feedback on institutional systems and practices, joining Communities of Practice, building ongoing networks etc.).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (Internal)

York University Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion. <https://rights.info.yorku.ca/>

York University: Supports for Student Well being. <https://www.yorku.ca/well-being/resources/students/>

Black Inclusion at York: Framework and Action Plan for Addressing Anti-Black Racism.
<https://www.yorku.ca/abr/>

York Indigenous Framework. <https://indigenous.yorku.ca/files/2017/08/Indigenous-Framework-for-York-University-A-Guide-to-Action.pdf>

York University Decolonizing, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028.
<https://www.yorku.ca/dedi-strategy/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (External)

Explore in 15-30 Minutes

Center for Innovation in Campus Mental Health (2020) *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Toolkit*
<https://campusmentalhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CICMH-Equity-Diversity-Inclusion-Toolkit-EN.pdf>

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan. (2021). *Equity-focused teaching strategy list* [Google Doc]. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UK3HFQv-3qMDNjvtOfFPbts38ApOL7ghpPE0iSYJ1Z8/edit#heading=h.bfyxplihlmjs>

Ahenkora, E. (2020). Safe and Brave Spaces Don't Work (And What You Can Do Instead). *Medium*.
<https://medium.com/@elise.k.ahen/safe-and-brave-spaces-dont-work-and-what-you-can-do>
Center for Innovation in Campus Mental Health (2020) *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Toolkit*
<https://campusmentalhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CICMH-Equity-Diversity-Inclusion-Toolkit-EN.pdf>

Gassam, J. (2021, December 22). 7 Ways Professors Can Promote Equity In The Classroom. *Forbes*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2021/12/22/7-ways-professors-can-promote-equity-in-the-classroom/?sh=6f89a2c65979>

Sue, D. W., Alsaidi, S., Awad, M. N., Glaeser, E., Calle, C. Z., & Mendez, N. (2019). Disarming racial microaggressions: Microintervention strategies for targets, white allies, and bystanders. *American Psychologist*, 74(1). <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000296>

University of Southern California (2020). Seven Effective Ways to Promote Equity in the Classroom.
<https://rossier.usc.edu/news-insights/news/seven-effective-ways-promote-equity-classroom/>

Explore in 30-60 minutes

Rolón-Dow, R. (2019). Stories of Microaggressions and Microaffirmation: A Framework for Understanding Campus Racial Climate. *NCID Currents*, 1(1).
<https://doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.106>

Sue, D. W. (2021). *Microintervention Toolkit (Part 1): Individual Actions and Best Practices to disarm and neutralize microaggressions*. https://priceschool.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/microintervention.toolkit.brochure_part_1.pdf

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan. (2021). *Equity-focused teaching: Principles, strategies, resources*. University of Michigan. <https://crlt.umich.edu/equity-focused-teaching/principles-strategies-resources>

Explore in 60+ minutes

Experiential Learning Hub, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (2022). *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Practice*. Toronto Metropolitan University.
<https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/ediinpractice/front-matter/introduction/>

Kumar, R., & Refaei, B. (2021). *Equity and inclusion in higher education : strategies for teaching*. The University of Chicago Press.
<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/E/bo135973059.html>

Would you like to learn more?

Contact us at Teaching Commons for additional resources, handouts, applications, courses, workshops, examples, advice, assistance, one-on-one consulting, and everything else related to teaching and learning. We are happy and eager to assist you!



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