

OMBUDS & EDI

Recommendations and Resources for Canadian Higher Education Ombuds from the 2021 ACCUO EDI Survey



*Prepared for Association of Canadian College & University
Ombudspersons (ACCUO) by:*

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Table of Contents

OMBUDS & Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)	4
Introduction	4
Survey Results – Executive Summary	5
What ombuds had to say	5
Five things ombuds are looking for	6
Ombuds want to support each other around EDI	6
Résultats du sondage – Sommaire exécutif	7
Voici ce que les ombudsman avaient à dire	7
Cinq choses que les ombudsman recherchent	8
Les ombuds veulent se soutenir mutuellement en ce qui concerne les questions de EDI	9
How do ombuds understand EDI in relation to their work?	10
Defining Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)	11
Equality vs. Equity	12
EDI in the higher education context	14
EDI as it relates to ombuds work	14
What types of EDI issues are ombuds encountering?	16
Not all ombuds are okay dealing with EDI matters	17
Within higher education institutions EDI work has changed because of BLM	18
...and also within ombuds offices	18
EDI actions that ombuds are open to in the near term	19
Our EDI recommendations for ACCUO	20
From quick definitions to deeper dives - are we talking about the same thing?	22
Identities & Intersectionality	23
Should I use the term BIPOC? Racialized? Visible minority? Persons of Colour?	23
What does intersectionality mean?	23
Racism	24
How can we understand racism, racial discrimination, and structural/systemic racism?	24
What is anti-Black / anti-Indigenous / anti-Asian racism?	25
Ally & Bystander	26
What is an ally?	26
Is an ally the same as a bystander?	26
Can I be an ombuds and an ally?	26
Safe & Brave Spaces	27
What is a safe space?	27
How is a brave space different from a safe space?	27
What about the concepts of moral courage & honest diversity?	27

Are ombuds offices “safe spaces” or “brave spaces”?	27
How can I ensure that my office is seen as accessible and inclusive?	28
Microaggressions & Unconscious bias	29
What are microaggressions?	29
What is unconscious bias?	29
What do ombuds need to know about unconscious bias?	29
Power & Privilege	30
What does white privilege refer to?	30
What contributions might an ombuds have to the power/privilege conversation?	30
Interrupting Harm	31
What is cancelling / ghosting / boycotting / Othering?	31
What does it mean to call out / call in?	31
Can I call out / call in as an ombuds?	31
<i>Additional resources & ways to engage in EDI learning for ombuds</i>	32

OMBUDS & Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

Introduction

This report was prepared for ACCUO from member responses to the 2021 ACCUO EDI Survey. While we have included unattributed and edited quotes from the survey, we have not included any identifying details in this document, to enable sharing with ACCUO members. In this document we have included: an executive summary of the survey results in French and English; key equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) definitions and resources for ombuds (with links); and recommendations for further education / training to support ombuds practice at the individual level and as a profession as it relates to EDI.

One of the aims of this survey was to provide ACCUO with information about how best to support members in understanding and implementing EDI. Ombuds were eager to have an opportunity to discuss results from this survey. They mentioned wanting ACCUO's support to engage in dialogue / training/ resources around EDI issues that are tailored to the ombuds experience/mandate; (esp. what other Canadian ombuds find most useful) and making the EDI ad hoc committee permanent.

Here is the type of EDI training members said would be useful to their ombuds practice (*Q: Selon vous, quelle formation pourrait être utile concernant l'ÉDI dans votre pratique d'ombudsman?*). We have begun to explore items 1-7 in this report, as well as other key EDI concepts.

1. Defining and working to promote EDI as an ombuds / *Définir et promouvoir l'ÉDI en tant qu'ombudsman*
2. Common EDI issues encountered by ombuds / *Problèmes courants d'EDI rencontrés par les ombudsman*
3. Equity vs. equality / *La distinction entre équité et égalité*
4. Defining and understanding unconscious bias / *Définir et reconnaître des biais inconscients*
5. Defining anti-Black / anti-Indigenous racism / *Définir du racisme contre les noirs et autochtones; white privilege, oppression, colonial structures/ Définir concept privilège blanc, de l'oppression et des structures coloniales*
6. Intersectionality / *Intersectionnalité*
7. Allyship / *Alliance*
8. Suggested procedures for dealing with EDI cases / *Procédures suggérées pour traiter d'un cas d'EDI*
9. Reviewing policies / systemic investigations with an EDI lens / *Examiner les politiques (systemique) avec une lentille EDI*
10. EDI & ombuds impartiality/neutrality / *EDI & ombuds impartialité/neutralité*
11. Access issues in a remote learning environment & impact of pandemic/technology usage on equity / *Explorer les problèmes d'accès dans un environnement d'apprentissage à distance & impact de la pandémie et de l'utilisation de la technologie sur l'équité.*

We thank you for trusting us with this review, and we welcome your questions and comments!

Heather & Brent

August 31, 2021

Survey Results – Executive Summary

In early 2021, 27 ombuds offices participated in an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Survey developed by ACCUO for its members (71% of ACCUO's membership of 38 members). French and English versions of the survey were distributed, and results have been merged. Most respondents completed all questions.

What ombuds had to say



44% of ombuds offices encounter EDI issues every day / week, 37% encounter EDI issues a few times a month and the remainder, rarely or not at all. Examples include:

- Complaints about individual students, faculty (*supervisors), staff, groups - microaggressions, stereotyping, bias, ableism, racist/homophobic statements
- Discrimination / inequity in classrooms, evaluation, in placements / coops / practicums
- Lack of diversity / inclusivity in curriculum / teaching styles; lack of understanding of histories of exclusion of certain groups from certain programs
- Failure to build EDI into policy, processes, decision-making
- Difficulty accessing services; failure to accommodate



85% of ombuds offices indicated that they were uneasy or sometimes uneasy (depending on the matter) about dealing with EDI matters. Concerns included: damaging relationships or causing harm; lack of education/expertise in EDI; lack of mandate; role confusion; personal insight (lack of or too much); impartiality; uncertainty ('grey zones').



67% of ombuds offices deal with EDI issues in part, and then refer matters to campus EDI supports; only a few deal directly with EDI matters. This does not mean offices are doing formal reviews / investigations of EDI – 89% said they would not or that “it depends.”



59% of offices track EDI in some way – e.g, keeping stats on cases with an EDI component; noting visitors' self-identified characteristics; stats only for some issues; irregular collection. EDI stats are shared in annual reports (including as case studies), meetings, with EDI offices. Reasons for not sharing statistics? Too few cases, inconsistent data, or no reason to share.



Every ombuds office indicated they were aware of where EDI resides within their institution, a few offices also mentioned wanting support from fellow ombuds related to EDI. Around 1/3 of offices were unaware of institutional EDI reports/statistics but said they would check. 2/3 were aware – but only ½ had reviewed them in the last year – the rest had not had time.



89% of ombuds offices think their institution is approaching EDI differently because of Black Lives Matter (BLM). 63% of ombuds offices are approaching EDI work differently (e.g., prioritizing EDI PD/learning; more partnerships/involvement with EDI units (initiatives; training; committee work as part of Anti-Racism initiative / EDI working groups; providing training/ talks to staff/students/administration/faculty), although not without some challenges (e.g., lack of time, don't know where to start (right mindset?); lack of institutional support; EDI not a priority for ombuds/ ombuds is “secondary” EDI support to other EDI /human rights dedicated offices.

Five things ombuds are looking for

1. **Support from ACCUO and an opportunity to discuss results from the survey.** Dialogue around EDI issues; ombuds-specific resources (esp. resources other ombuds find most useful) and training; permanent EDI committee with strategic plan.
2. **Connection with, and support from, other ombuds.** Understanding that *time* is an issue due to caseloads, staffing, isolation (only ombuds in the office!).
3. **Help defining and recognizing key EDI concepts** – e.g., unconscious bias; allyship; oppression; anti-Black / anti-Indigenous racism and all other forms of discrimination (gender, sex, disability, LGBTQ2S+, etc.), intersectionality; equality vs. equity.
4. **Professional development opportunities** that are tailored to the (Canadian) ombuds mandate/experience.
5. **Discussion around ombuds EDI challenges & opportunities** – difficult conversations; putting EDI into practice (policy reviews; systemic investigations); involvement across campus without compromising impartiality (e.g., committee work; training; programming); supporting BIPOC visitors; making time for EDI / EDI plans within ombuds office; effective EDI referrals; EDI in virtual context (e.g., stats on who has cameras on/off?).

Ombuds want to support each other around EDI

Advice / Best Practices for providing support/engaging in EDI conversations – <i>Ombuds to ombuds</i>	
	Education! Consider EDI part of a professional responsibility as a Canadian ombuds to understand EDI issues, and our own biases, privilege, and positionality. Take advantage of all related training offered by your institution.
	Learn how to be an effective ally. People share information if they feel a genuine level of understanding and humility. Be able to admit what you do not know.
	Include EDI language on website and ombuds promotional materials. Explain the connection to your mandate.
	Build relationships with EDI offices/professionals on your campus. Collaborate with offices that support students dealing with EDI issues to leverage strength in collaboration & amplify voices.
	Make effective referrals to university resources that can provide the EDI support visitors need; help visitors to understand processes, timing/formal vs. informal reporting. Consider a confidential meeting with the visitor and the EDI office to benefit from their expertise.
	Be direct. Help the visitor identify exactly what is going on and to objectively assess for themselves if it is an EDI issue. Review the university's EDI policy /activities (if applicable, provincial legislation) with the visitor, as a way to understand institutional perspectives.

Résultats du sondage – Sommaire exécutif

Au début de 2021, 27 bureaux d'ombudsman ont participé à une enquête sur l'équité, la diversité et l'inclusion (EDI) élaborée par l'AOUCC pour ses membres (71 % des 38 membres de l'AOUCC). Les versions française et anglaise du sondage ont été distribuées et les résultats ont été fusionnés. La plupart des participants au sondage ont répondu à toutes les questions.

Voici ce que les ombudsman avaient à dire



44% des bureaux d'ombudsman rencontrent des problèmes liés à l'EDI chaque jour/semaine, 37% rencontrent des problèmes d'EDI quelques fois par mois et les autres bureaux traitent ces cas rarement ou pas du tout. Les exemples comprennent:

- Plaintes concernant des étudiants, des professeurs (*directeurs/directrices de thèse), du personnel administratif, des groupes - micro-agressions, stéréotypes, préjugés, capacitisme, déclarations racistes/homophobes
- Discrimination/iniquité dans les salles de classe, les évaluations, ou pendant les stages/ou autres placements professionnels
- Manque de diversité / inclusivité dans les programmes / styles d'enseignement ; manque de compréhension des histoires d'exclusion de groupes minoritaires dans certains programmes
- Défaut d'intégrer l'EDI dans les politique, les procédures, et les prises de décisions institutionnels
- Difficulté d'accès aux services; défaut d'accommodement



85% des bureaux d'ombudsman ont indiqué qu'ils étaient souvent ou parfois mal à l'aise (selon le sujet) à l'idée de traiter les questions liées à l'EDI. Les préoccupations comprenaient : des relations préjudiciables ou causant des dommages ; manque d'éducation/expertise en EDI ; absence de mandat; confusion des rôles; perspicacité personnelle (manque ou trop); impartialité; incertitude (« zones grises »).



67% des bureaux d'ombudsman traitent en partie les problèmes d'EDI, puis renvoient les questions aux services de soutien EDI du campus ; seuls quelques-uns traitent directement des questions EDI. Cela ne signifie pas que les bureaux procèdent à des examens/enquêtes formels de l'EDI – 89 % ont dit qu'ils ne le feraient pas ou que « cela dépend ».



59% des bureaux d'ombudsman traitent les cas liés à l'EDI d'une manière ou d'une autre - par exemple, en tenant des statistiques sur les cas avec une composante EDI ; en notant les caractéristiques auto-identifiées du visiteur ; statistiques uniquement pour certains problèmes ; ou collecte irrégulière. Les statistiques d'EDI sont partagées dans les rapports annuels, les réunions, avec les bureaux EDI ou sous forme d'études de cas. Les bureaux ne partageant pas leurs statistiques ont noté trop peu de cas, des données incohérentes ou indiqué aucune raison de partager.



Tous les bureaux d'ombudsman ont indiqué qu'ils étaient au courant de l'endroit où réside le bureau de EDI au sein de leur institution, quelques bureaux d'ombudsman ont également mentionné qu'ils souhaitaient le soutien d'autres ombudsman liés à l'EDI. Environ 1/3 des bureaux n'étaient pas au courant des rapports/statistiques de EDI institutionnels mais ont déclaré qu'ils les vérifieraient. 2/3 étaient au courant – mais seulement la moitié les avaient examinés l'année dernière – les autres n'avaient pas eu le temps.



89% des bureaux d'ombudsman pensent que leur institution aborde l'EDI différemment en raison de Black Lives Matter (BLM). 63 % des bureaux d'ombudsman ont une approche différente du travail de l'EDI (par exemple, donner priorité au développement professionnel / apprentissage de EDI au personnel administratif/aux étudiants/à la direction/au corps professoral), bien que ses efforts ne se déroulent pas sans quelques défis (par exemple, manque de temps, de pas savoir par où commencer (bon état d'esprit ?) ; manque de soutien institutionnel ; l'EDI n'est pas une priorité pour les ombudsman/ombudsman constitue un soutien « secondaire » par rapport à l'EDI à et il y a d'autres bureaux dédiés à l'EDI / aux droits de la personne.

Cinq choses que les ombudsman recherchent

1. **Le soutien de l'AOUCC et une occasion de discuter des résultats de l'enquête.** Dialogue autour des problématiques EDI ; ressources spécifiques aux ombudsman (en particulier les ressources que d'autres ombudsman trouvent les plus utiles) et formations ; un comité de EDI permanent avec un plan stratégique.
2. **Le réseautage et le soutien entre ombudsman afin de mieux comprendre et avancer l'EDI.** Comprendre que le temps est un challenge en raison de la charge de travail, le manque de personnel, et parfois l'isolement (parfois un seul ombudsman au bureau).
3. **De l'aide à définir et à reconnaître les concepts clés de l'EDI** - Par exemple, les préjugés inconscients ; alliance; oppression; racisme anti-Black / racisme anti-Autochtone et toutes autres formes de discrimination (genre, sexe, handicap, LGBTQ2S+, etc.), intersectionnalité ; les différences entre l'égalité et l'équité.
4. **Possibilités de perfectionnement professionnel** adaptées au mandat et à l'expérience des ombudsman au Canada.
5. **Discussion autour des défis et opportunités de l'EDI de l'ombuds** – Comment entreprendre des conversations difficiles ; la mise en pratique de l'EDI (revues de politiques ; enquêtes systémiques) ; participation à travers le campus sans compromettre l'impartialité (par exemple, travail de comité, formation, programmation); soutenir les visiteurs PANDC; prendre du temps pour les plans EDI / EDI au sein du bureau de l'ombudsman ; des références de EDI efficaces ; EDI dans un contexte virtuel (par exemple, statistiques sur qui a activé/désactivé les caméras).

Les ombuds veulent se soutenir mutuellement en ce qui concerne les questions de EDI

Conseils / Meilleures pratiques pour fournir un soutien / s'engager dans des conversations EDI - Entre ombudsman	
	Éducation! Considérez que l'EDI fait partie d'une responsabilité professionnelle en tant qu'ombudsman au Canada pour comprendre les questions liés à l'EDI, ainsi que nos propres préjugés, privilèges et positionnements. Profitez de toutes les formations offertes par votre établissement.
	Apprenez à être des alliés efficaces. Les gens partagent des informations s'ils ressentent un véritable niveau de compréhension et d'humilité. Soyez capable d'admettre ce que vous ne savez pas.
	Inclure le langage EDI sur le site Web et le matériel promotionnel de l'ombudsman. Expliquez le lien entre EDI et votre mandat.
	Établissez des relations avec les bureaux et les professionnels de l'EDI sur votre campus. Collaborez avec les bureaux qui soutiennent les étudiants confrontés à des problèmes EDI pour tirer parti de la force de la collaboration et amplifier les voix.
	Faire des références efficaces aux ressources universitaires qui peuvent fournir le soutien EDI dont les visiteurs ont besoin ; aider les visiteurs à comprendre les processus, le calendrier/les rapports formels et informels. Envisagez une rencontre confidentielle avec le visiteur et le bureau EDI pour bénéficier de leur expertise.
	Soyez direct. Aidez le visiteur à identifier exactement ce qui se passe et à évaluer objectivement par lui-même s'il s'agit d'une question de EDI. Passez en revue la politique/les activités de EDI de l'université (le cas échéant, la législation provinciale) avec le visiteur, afin de comprendre les perspectives institutionnelles.

How do ombuds understand EDI in relation to their work?

“With a focus on fairness, equity, and respect, the ombudsperson builds capacity to help the institution be accountable to its own value and mission statements.”

ACCUO Standards of Practice

Just slightly under **1/2 of respondents to the EDI Survey¹ indicated that they were not confident they could explain how equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI) relates to their ombuds work.** This is not surprising given every ombuds office is unique in mandate, approach, and institutional context (EDI may ‘live’ elsewhere). It also turns out that *actual* definitions of EDI are quite rare, at least in the university context.

Only 5 out of the 15 Canadian research-intensive universities included in a 2019 research review paper offered formal definitions of equity, diversity and/or inclusion in their policy documents. Instead, the authors discovered that institutional Strategic Plans include “broad and vague language” around EDI, and most policy documents conflate all EDI issues, and express “institutional principles or purposes” rather than stating definitions (e.g., “we are committed to proactively identifying barriers to inclusion”). They conclude, “[t]he majority of universities define equity as inclusion, focusing on removing institutional barriers to equal access to education.”² The following observations are interesting for ombuds (our emphasis added):

Equity is most often associated with the concept of fairness. Many scholars see equity as a mechanism for recognizing systemic power and privilege in higher education (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008)....

There were two distinct ideological approaches apparent [in the policies] in relation to equity – equity as fairness versus equity as inclusion. Four universities (Dalhousie, McGill, UBC and Waterloo) viewed equity as a concept of fairness, mentioning “acknowledgement of systemic power and privilege” and stating the need for “redistribution of resources”.

A more common approach among the universities was viewing equity as a concept of inclusion, which requires focusing on identifying and removing social and cultural barriers. Six universities explicitly mentioned “removing structural barriers” and “identifying and addressing informal obstacles, barriers, and biases” that limit equitable access and opportunities for equity-seeking groups. As noted in the literature (Clarke, 2014), equity as inclusion allows for organizations to change, so that all individuals can achieve the basic minimum, while equity as fairness allows for changes that can potentially secure the maximum success for equity-seeking groups. Giving up privilege to support the maximum for equity-seeking groups seems to be the less frequently promoted implementation approach among the Canadian universities. [p.46]

¹ QFR: Êtes-vous à l’aise d’expliquer comment « l’équité, la diversité et l’inclusion (ÉDI) » sont liées à votre travail d’ombudsman?

² Melissa Guenter & Merli Tamtik, “[Policy Analysis of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies in Canadian University – How far have we come?](#)”, 2019, Canadian Journal of Higher Education (Canada) at 51.

Defining Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

*Diversity is a fact.
Equity is a choice.
Inclusion is an action.
Belonging is an outcome.*
- [Arthur Chan](#), DEI strategist

Instead of including a working definition for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI or DEI), we have compiled elements of several definitions including from [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council \(SSHRC – Canada\)](#) as well as various university websites, into bullet lists to show the layered complexity and ever-evolving nature of these concepts.

Equity

- Fairness³ & respect
- Inclusion & recognition
- Access, opportunities, treatment, benefits
- Identification, understanding, and removal of systemic barriers, injustices & disadvantages
- Parity in policy, process, and outcomes
- Focus on underrepresented groups (e.g., women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, racialized minorities, LGBTQ2+, etc.)

Diversity

- Identity and intersectionality
- Representation & demographic mix of a community
- Perspectives and lived experiences
- Including differences in race, colour, place of origin, immigrant and newcomer status, ethnic origin, ability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, socio-economic class, religion, education, family/marital status.
- Recognition and valuing of difference

Inclusion

- Engagement, opportunities & participation & flourishing
- Active, intentional, and continuous process
- Welcoming and belonging, respect and dignity
- Addressing inequities in power and privilege; support
- Ensuring individuals are valued and respected for contributions

The word “belonging” is often added to the EDI list and may be defined as, “[f]ull membership in the community, not only in formal participation but an affirming sense of community with inclusive people, physical spaces, and organizational structures.”⁴

³ In a training session that Heather ran for faculty at the University of Toronto in Spring 2021, one of the activities was to brainstorm synonyms for “equity” - “fairness” is a word that was frequently cited.

⁴ International Ombudsman Association (IOA), February 2021 Webinar: “Ombuds: Advocates for Fair Treatment” (thanks to Annette Fraser for sharing)

Equality vs. Equity

One of the survey respondents noted the important distinction between equality and equity.⁵ Both are important considerations in determining what is *fair*. However, goals and definitions matter - for example, in defining equality or inequality, is there a focus on the present, the future, the past? Equality in the short or long term? Equality in the legal sense (equal under the law) or in the moral/ethical/philosophical sense?

As ombuds know, “[b]ecause people and their circumstances differ, there is, Dworkin writes, a trade-off between treating people equally and treating them “as equals.” [Rothman, 2020] The equality vs. equity conversation is complex. As an example, consider a student who is complaining that they were treated unfairly under a particular policy. An ombuds might be asking many of the following questions:

EQUALITY considerations:

- Does the policy (on its face) apply equally to all students?
- Is the student (or a group of students) excluded where they should be included - does the policy treat all students as of equal value?
- In practice, is the policy applied in the same way (equally) across all students?
- Have students in similar circumstances been treated the same under the policy?
- Same / similar outcomes?

EQUITY considerations:

- Are there reasons why the student should be treated differently under the policy/the policy should be applied in a different way under the circumstances?
- Should an exception be made to achieve an equitable outcome?
- What changes must be made to the policy to ensure it applies equally in practice?



Joshua Rothman, "[The Equality Conundrum](#)", New Yorker magazine, Jan 2020 (USA)

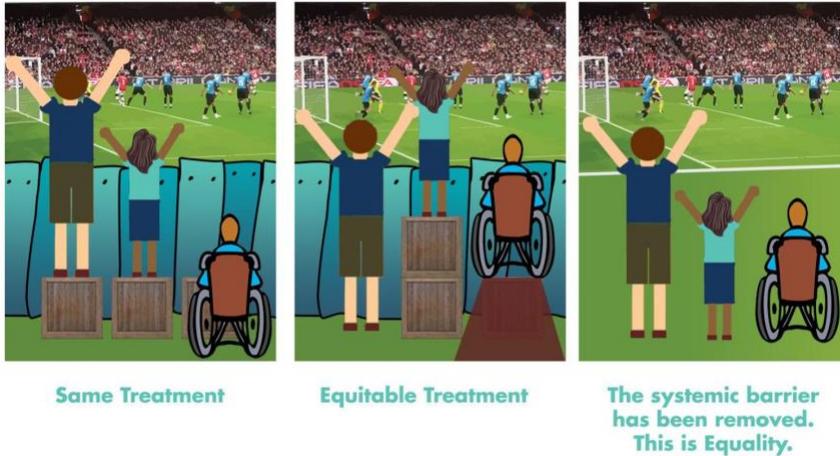
"I have observed when people bring issues or complaints to my Office, they often feel like they have been singled out. Often they say they want to be treated "just like everyone else." In taking the time to understand their issues, we discover that what they really seek is to be treated in a way that accounts for their unique circumstances to ensure that the process is fair."

- [Sherra Profit, June 2020, Reflection on Tenure as Canada's Taxpayers' Ombudsman](#)

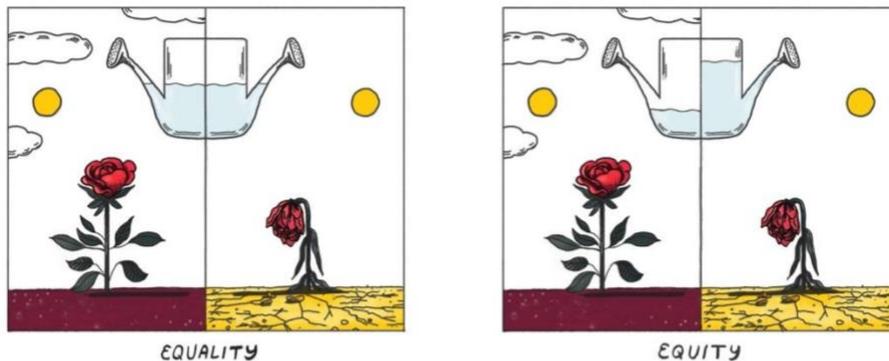
⁵ FR: Il est notamment important de promouvoir la distinction entre équité et égalité.

While sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words, the often-used image of three persons behind a fence who are trying to watch a sports match, is not without its critics.⁶

Equity vs. Equality



We looked around, and found this alternative from [Annelise Capossela](#) (New York, USA) which perhaps captures the role of environment (system, history) in why an equitable allocation of resources (water), rather than an equal one, is appropriate to get to the desired outcome (flourishing for all).⁷



We think it is time for an ombuds (or Canadian higher education) graphic that speaks to fairness, equity, and justice – any thoughts?

⁶ [“The problem with that equity vs. equality graphic you’re using”](#) (Cultural Organizing blog, Updated November 1, 2016)

⁷ As Brent noted, perhaps a third image (after watering) might be useful - at first glance, neither equality nor equity is benefiting the wilted rose on the right!

EDI in the higher education context

As authors Guenter and Tamtik note about EDI in universities, “the task of supporting authentic equity and inclusion among students and faculty is multi-layered and complex.” While there are benefits to moving beyond “institutional rhetoric” into “active commitments” to EDI, this is a work in progress.



[8:51] [Understanding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the Academy](#), Department of Medicine, McMaster University (ON, Canada) 2020 [using airplane seating as an analogy]

[4:42] [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Ryerson](#), Denise O'Neil Green, Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion (OVPECI), Ryerson University (ON, Canada), 2018



“[Equality, diversity and inclusion at universities: the power of a systemic approach](#)”, LERU Position Paper - Multiple authors (UK/Europe), 2019, pp. 3-13

“[Policy Analysis of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies in Canadian University – How far have we come?](#)” Melissa Guenter & Merli Tamtik, University of Manitoba (Canada), Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 2019

EDI as it relates to ombuds work

According to a recent study by the Centre for Employment Equity (University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2020), looking at “strategies that are effective for reducing discrimination and bias and increasing diversity within workplace organization,” ombuds offices provide a critical alternative to formal institutional grievance processes for EDI complaints. All ombuds surveyed considered EDI relevant to their work as ombuds⁸, although to different degrees:



“As ombuds we are to listen deeply before cases regarding EDI come to our office and act proactively to rid our institution of all forms of racism and discrimination.”

“[EDI] is integral, foundational, and absolutely essential to our work as Ombuds in Canada.”

“[EDI] is a priority for me as an Ombuds and as a human being who wants to be better, and wants the world to be better.”

“I have a mandate to identify systemic racism, so I use this to get more involved in EDI matters.”

“Our world has changed; EDI is a fairness issue that can't be ignored, especially where your PSI does not have a human rights (or EDI) office.”

“[EDI] is something that we must be cognizant of in the course of work.”

Here are some additional comments from respondents about the nature of EDI work:

⁸ QFR: *Des commentaires concernant l'ÉDI dans votre bureau / votre travail en tant qu'ombudsman?*

- EDI isn't just about training, it is about how EDI is applied **"in the field"**
- "[EDI] is an **ongoing discussion...**"
- "EDI work is **ongoing, it is not about reacting** when something has come to light."
- "It is **very easy to refer a student to an EDI office**. What the student really wants is to be listened to and acknowledged. They don't necessarily want to file a complaint. I have learned to let the student talk and then provide them with their options, but not just refer them in the interest of time."

Of critical importance is for ombuds to be appreciated and seen as valuable – distinct from, yet enhancing, EDI resources and supports on campus. As one respondent noted: "I think we have to explain how our offices are part of the solution if [institutions want] to implement EDI in a meaningful way, so we have to make our mark, differentiate ourselves from others yet be viewed as complementary."



["What Works: Evidence-Based Ideas to Increase Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace"](#), Chapter 3, Making Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Systems Better, by Frank Dobbin, Harvard University & Alexandra Kalev, Tel Aviv University), undated

["How Ombuds Programs Can Promote Diversity and Inclusion"](#), Catalyst (global non-profit), Nov 18, 2020

["Addressing Harassment in the Promotion of Equity and Fairness – A Perspective from Canadian University Ombuds"](#), Julie Boncompain & Brent Epperson (Canada), 2018

"EDI is part of everyone's responsibility at my institution and must be understood as forming part of every encounter and experience."

" I always refer to the appropriate [human rights] individual/office if it is a formal complaint. I may also look into the process followed [by that individual/office]. I don't investigate the human rights issue itself."

"Si c'est du harcèlement discriminatoire, je ne le traiterais pas et réfèrerais la personne au bureau de harcèlement et violence.... Si la situation a un lien avec des pratiques administratives ou académiques alors je le traiterais"

What types of EDI issues are ombuds encountering?

<p>Common EDI issues identified by ombuds offices⁹ include:</p>
<p>Discrimination/inequitable treatment: race, gender, age, family status, country of origin, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● in classroom, adjudication, evaluation, or grading ● within supervisory relationships; group work; placements/coops/practicums ● in engaging with administrative staff or instructors; in accessing services ● especially related to graduate and international students
<p>Complaints related to individual interactions with students, professors, groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● microaggressions ● stereotypes; stigmas ● bias & unconscious bias ● ableism; misunderstanding needs of students with accessibility needs ● racist; homophobic statements
<p>Questions/concerns about academic leaves (family; trauma; mental health); name/gender changes; challenges related to family not accepting of student's difficulties/identities</p>
<p>Academic/learning complaints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of diversity in curriculum ● Teaching styles (not inclusive) ● certain groups not historically being welcome in certain programs [systemic issues] - i.e. women in engineering; men in Nursing; Indigenous students; students with disabilities ● Lack of understanding of colonial history and impacts on Indigenous learners ● Postponement of exams due to illness
<p>Systemic issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Failure to build EDI into policy, practices and protocols ● <i>Manque au niveau de la collecte des données;</i> ● Failure to consider equity in decision-making ● Lack of support/access to services ● Difficult/time consuming processes for dealing with allegations of discrimination / bias
<p>Refusal/failure to accommodate disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● including mental health issues; disability, religion, even when university approved ● levels of service to complete studies, course content, tutorial support

⁹ QFR: Si vous rencontrez des problèmes liés à l'ÉDI dans le cadre de votre travail, pouvez-vous nous décrire les 3 principaux types de problématiques rencontrés ?

Not all ombuds are okay dealing with EDI matters

If you have fears, concerns, doubts, or apprehensions about handling EDI work as an ombuds, you are not alone! Even though equity, diversity, and inclusion have arguably always been considerations in ombuds' fairness work at individual and systemic levels, ombuds hold privileged positions within institutions of higher education – positions that come with great responsibility. If, as some authors posit, “[i]nstitutional integrity and accountability and the importance of recognizing the role higher education plays in advancing social equity will be key for postsecondary institutions in the COVID era and post-COVID recovery,”¹⁰ then ombuds will also need to demonstrate the ways that they are working to support these ends.

Most offices indicated they were uneasy, sometimes uneasy (depending on the issue) about taking on EDI matters.¹¹ Here are the TOP 5 reasons why:

- Raising EDI issues with someone could damage relationship (e.g., put person on the defensive /cause offence) or further harm (e.g., retaliation; retraumatizing)
- Feel lack of education/expertise in this area to identify & apply at high level - prefer to leave it to specialist office or collaborate with such an office
- Concern about taking issues outside of jurisdiction; role confusion; lack of official capacity / mandate to deal with EDI / - why listen to ombuds about EDI?
- Feel lack of personal insight (e.g., white, male, cis-gender, able bodied) or too much personal insight (e.g., personal identities, triggers) - “Can I be impartial?”
- Where it is in the ‘grey zone’ e.g., mental health concerns; racism allegations without supporting facts or proof.

Other concerns included:

- Do not want to be part of official HR complaint/prefer to leave to dedicated offices (where there is one)
- Encountering resistance due to privilege either from individuals or the institution (ombuds "meddling")
- Unsure how to balance fairness for all students and EDI
- Getting consent to investigate/review; ensuring safety
- Uncertainty around the response/approach that the institution would take to resolve the issues (unconscious bias).

“I am very eager to do what I can for EDI. However, I have limited resources as a one-person office.”

¹⁰ Blankenberger B. & Williams, A.M. (2020 University of Illinois Springfield, USA) [“COVID and the impact on higher education: The essential role of integrity and accountability”](#). *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, Vol.42, Issue 3.

¹¹ QFR: *Avez-vous des craintes/ préoccupations/ appréhensions concernant le traitement d'une affaire comportant un élément ÉDI ?* Response: 85% dit Oui, parfois, ou Cela dépend du sujet à traité.

Within higher education institutions EDI work has changed because of BLM

Here are the institutional examples of EDI related responses to BLM (noting that some initiatives may have started before 2020 and/or be unrelated to BLM):

- Anti-racism Task Force; EDI Committee; EDI Plans
- Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate report
- New EDI offices created; new senior advisor / administration positions - e.g. VP EDI
- Messaging from university (e.g., president); statements of university priorities (e.g., website)
- Request for leaders to outline plans/commitments to address racism
- Admissions changes / hiring changes
- Anti-racism training and initiatives

...and also within ombuds offices

- Prioritizing EDI learning/PD within the office
- Reaching out to meet with the EDI team; more partnerships/involvement with other units that work within EDI (initiatives; training)
- Committee work as part of anti-racism initiative / EDI working groups
- Providing training/ talks to staff/students/administration/faculty
- Being more deliberate in bringing to light systemic issues
- Being more conscious of word choice
- Considering statistical data collection

Notwithstanding an overall openness to learning / doing more EDI work, many offices commented that there were challenges / problems in putting EDI initiatives into action¹², including:

- We don't have time - there are too many complaints!
- We don't know where to start.
- The office lacks institutional support for EDI
- EDI is not priority for the ombuds office
 - Separate EDI offices/supports (ombuds office is a secondary support)
 - Limited capacity (staffing of ombuds)
 - requires mindset to make time for EDI

¹² QFR: *Quels sont certains des problèmes ou défis que votre bureau pourrait rencontrer si vous souhaitez mettre en place des actions concrètes pour promouvoir et intégrer l'ÉDI en action ?*

EDI actions that ombuds are open to in the near term

There were great suggestions in survey responses for training and further learning around EDI.¹³ Here are NINE (9) EDI-related things ombuds offices might do in the 6-8 months:

1. Review anti-Black / anti-Indigenous racism / white privilege initiatives / activities on campus.
2. Reach out to another ombuds office about an EDI matter to talk through options....
3. Read an EDI related book.
4. Watch a video; listen to a podcast.
5. Participate in EDI-related training and programming (e.g., webinars) that will improve the Ombuds' ability to respond appropriately to EDI matters in a sensitive, respectful, and constructive manner.
6. Become members of committees where our voice, influence, and knowledge can be put forward to support anti-racism work (i.e., 'voice without vote').
7. Consider website and materials with an EDI lens – are they as accessible and inclusive as possible? Is there an opportunity to include specific EDI details?
8. Be more aware of EDI supports/resources on campus, connect with them and ensure you are making the most effective referrals possible.
9. Also, consider booking 10 minutes a day, 30 minutes a week (or an hour or more a month) in your calendar to reflect on the suggestions above and the resources included in this report. Or perhaps a daily checklist?

¹³ *QFR: Quelles actions liées à l'ÉDI pensez-vous que vous ou votre bureau seriez en mesure d'entreprendre au cours des 6 à 8 prochains mois ?* If you don't see your suggestion here, it may be because there was not enough information to find a link or original source document/podcast/video.

Our EDI recommendations for ACCUO

For consideration, here are our recommendations for the ACCUO Executive and EDI Ad Hoc Committee for future action based on the survey results:

1. ACCUO should **share the Executive Summary of the survey results and this report with members of the Executive Committee and the EDI Ad Hoc Committee.**
2. ACCUO should ask the EDI Ad Hoc Committee to draft a **paragraph about EDI to add to the website FAQ** (including a note about the role of ombuds in upholding institutional commitments to EDI and reference to the survey / results).
3. ACCUO should **encourage members to seek out their institution's definitions of EDI**, and if they do not have any, to find out why. It is hard to have measurable success, or to know if you are meeting commitments set out in policies (how do students rely on something that is vague?) if you do not know what you have committed to.
4. ACCUO should **extend an invitation to members to use the members-only Listserv to share what they have learned about EDI from their institutional review and discuss EDI issues.** Encourage this as a brave space for EDI discussions /questions.
5. ACCUO should consider making the **EDI Ad Hoc Committee a permanent standing committee.**
6. ACCUO should create a working group with the mandate to **facilitate connections between ombuds members around EDI.** This group would consider:
 - Establish mentor/mentee relationship opportunities for “new” members.
 - Support for members looking to engage in systemic EDI reviews.
 - Contemplate traditional and non-traditional (fun!) ways to engage members and their communities in EDI. For example, holding a drawing contest coming up with graphics to convey the concepts of equality, equity, fairness, diversity and inclusion. Alternatively, monthly EDI mini book/article reviews – “In 300 words or less, what are you reading on EDI, why, and what do you think so far?”
7. ACCUO should investigate **shared / iterative EDI resources** (WIKI) for the members portal, which might include:
 - a. Turning this resource list into a shared document that can be added to by members.
 - b. Starting a shared “making time for EDI in your daily practice” tip sheet.



8. ACCUO should **host training/discussion sessions** on the following topics at ACCUO mid-year and annual conferences, as well as at joint sessions with other ombuds organizations (e.g., FCO/ENOHE/AOUQ). We recommend considering arranging co-facilitators for sessions/ collaborations of two to three offices; for example, one ombuds who identifies with the challenge (and may not have answers), and one who perhaps has had some success addressing the challenge.
 - a. Is this EDI matter within my ombuds mandate? Ask for examples in advance.
 - b. Can I do EDI work and maintain impartiality? Ombuds are people too: How who you are (*identities) can affect what you do (*impartiality) – strategies for setting boundaries and “keeping your distance.”
 - c. Strategies for raising EDI issues (the ones that can cause offence) with faculty / staff.
 - d. How can I be reflective daily in my ombuds work around EDI?
 - e. How do I create an EDI plan for my office?
 - f. Am I biased? How to recognize unconscious bias as an ombuds and strategies for impartiality and perceptions of impartiality.
 - g. How do I review policies and processes with an EDI lens? Best practices for individual and systemic investigations.
 - h. How do systemic racism and colonial histories impact ombuds as a function/role within institutions?
 - i. How can I be restorative in my work & support the post-secondary institution commitments to Truth & Reconciliation?
 - j. Is it possible to do a “quick” systemic EDI review?

From quick definitions to deeper dives - are we talking about the same thing?

Included below are some definitions of words that are commonly used in discussions around EDI that are most likely relevant to ombuds practice.¹⁴ Where possible, we have tried to include resources and references that are ombuds or higher education specific. This is not intended to be a definitive list or to suggest these are the “proper” definitions – it is simply to provide a starting place for understanding and further inquiry (asking the individual what they mean by X or Y). Here are 3 additional compilations of words:

- [Canadian Race Relations Foundation Glossary](#)
- [Glossary DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING GLOSSARY OF TERMS](#) (Olla Jongerius, Germany, 2020)

As set out in our recommendations to ACCUO, we hope that ACCUO members will contribute, challenge, and engage with the content and resources included in this report. Our view is one perspective of many, informed by our identities, approach to research, and what was published and readily available online up to August 31, 2021. As requested in the survey responses, we have tried to locate and include ombuds-specific resources, as well as to indicate where the author /publisher/content is from (i.e., Canada, USA, Europe/UK etc.).

We welcome comments and questions and please let us know if you find any errors, omissions, or broken links!



¹⁴ Thanks to Anita Balakrishna, Director EDI at Temerty Medicine, U of T for flagging many of these terms/resources as part of a handout for our joint session for faculty in May 2021. Word cloud from: www.thewisefamily.com/how-to-promote-equity-inclusion-community-and-unity/dei-word-cloud/

Identities & Intersectionality

Should I use the term BIPOC? Racialized? Visible minority? Persons of Colour?

Great question. Words are always evolving (consider the movement away from the phrase “visible minority” although this is still a common term in Canadian policies), and words have different histories (naming vs. self-naming), implications (i.e., [Persons of Colour does not include Indigenous peoples who are distinct under the Canadian Constitution](#)) and degree of specificity. It may be helpful to see how they (an individual or community) refer to themselves, or ask “How would you like to be addressed?”

BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, Persons of Colour.

Racialized = Individuals / groups who have been designated through social and political processes to be part of a particular “race” and on that basis subjected to differential and/or unequal treatment. ([Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre](#))

In print, it is now widely accepted that in print the word “Black” and the term “Indigenous” should be capitalized (black is the colour, Black is people/culture).

What does intersectionality mean?

“Law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, which points to the different ways that race, class, gender and other identities intersect with one another. The intersecting layers of multiple identities further impact how people are viewed and treated in society and in the academy.” ([Sheila Cote-Meek](#))

“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGQTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.” ([Kimberlé Crenshaw](#))



[Indigenous Peoples: A Guide to Terminology ebook](#), Indigenous Corporate Training (Canada)

[“Why the term “BIPOC” is so complicated, explained by linguists”](#), Constance Grady (USA), June, 30 2020

[“Black with a capital 'B': Why it took news outlets so long to make a change that matters to so many”](#), Kashmala Fida Mohatarem, CBC News (Canada), July 20, 2020

[“Speaking out on the inequities in academia”](#), Sheila Cote-Meek (York University, ON), University Affairs, August 27, 2020



[2:46:17] [“Ethical Dilemmas Series - Understanding Racism and Anti-Racism”](#), Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre (Canada), YouTube, July 2020

[1:54] [“What is intersectionality?”](#) Kimberlé Crenshaw (UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School, USA), YouTube, June 2018

Racism

How can we understand racism, racial discrimination, and structural/systemic racism?

The following information is from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, including the [Policy & Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination](#) (2005, revised 2009), noting that all provinces / territories their equivalent.

Racial discrimination:

“There is no fixed definition of racial discrimination. However, it has been described as any distinction, conduct or action, whether intentional or not, but based on a person’s race, which has the effect of imposing burdens on an individual or group, not imposed upon others or which withholds or limits access to benefits available to other members of society. Race need only be a factor for racial discrimination to have occurred.”

Racism:

“Racism is a wider phenomenon than racial discrimination....Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time.”

Systemic discrimination:

“Systemic discrimination can be described as patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage for racialized persons.”
([Ontario Human Rights Commission](#))

- Racism and racial discrimination operate at several levels, including individual, systemic, or institutional and societal.
- Policies, practices, decision-making processes, and organizational culture can create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for racialized persons.
- Racial discrimination can occur through stereotyping and overt prejudice or in more subconscious, subtle and subversive ways.
- Racial discrimination can be impacted by related Code grounds such as colour, ethnic origin, place of origin, ancestry, and creed. In addition, race can overlap or intersect with other grounds such as sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, and family status to create unique or compounded experiences of discrimination.

What is anti-Black / anti-Indigenous / anti-Asian racism?

“The term ‘Anti-Black Racism’ was first expressed by Dr. Akua Benjamin, a Ryerson Social Work Professor. It seeks to highlight the unique nature of systemic racism on Black-Canadians and the history as well as experiences of slavery and colonization of people of Black-African descent in Canada.” ([Black Health Alliance \(Canada\)](#))

“Anti-Indigenous racism is the ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by Indigenous Peoples within Canada. It includes ideas and practices that establish, maintain, and perpetuate power imbalances, systemic barriers, and inequitable outcomes that stem from the legacy of colonial policies and practices in Canada.” (www.ontario.ca/document/data-standards-identification-and-monitoring-systemic-racism/glossary)

“In Canada, anti-Asian racism refers to historical and ongoing discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by peoples of Asian descent, based on others’ assumptions about their ethnicity and nationality.” (www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/asian-heritage-month/anti-asian-racism.html)



[83:05] [“Unpacking anti-Asian racism through an intersectional lens”](#), Rabble -Needs No Introduction Podcast with Feminists Deliver (Vancouver, BC), August 2020

[“Season 3: Decoding Black”](#) Centennial College Podcast (ON, Canada), 2020

[27:21] [“Anti-Indigenous racism in Canada”](#), *This is Why Podcast*, Global News Radio (Canada) June 2020



[“How Anti-Black racism on Canadian university campuses robs us all”](#) , Kristin Moriah, Queen’s University (ON, Canada), *The Conversation*, July 2020

[“The Souls of Black Professors”](#), Colleen Flaherty (USA), *Inside Higher Ed*, 2020

[“What is structural racism?”](#) Anne Bishop (NS, Canada), undated

Ally & Bystander

What is an ally?

“An ally is someone who recognizes the unearned privilege they receive from society’s patterns of injustice and takes responsibility for changing these patterns.” ([Anne Bishop](#)) Often allyship is a term applied to anti-racism work being done by white individuals, but it can apply to work across identities.

Is an ally the same as a bystander?

A bystander is generally understood as someone who has a passive (observing) rather than active (intervening) role in a situation that is “worthy of comment or action...[however] [b]ystanders can highlight positive acts that might otherwise be invisible or overlooked. They can redirect or de-escalate negative acts that might be problematic.” ([Scully & Rowe](#)).

Can I be an ombuds and an ally?

YES. Ombuds have arguably always been engaged in allyship behind the scenes within their institutions because they (a) understand that they occupy a privileged position (one with access to information and people), and (b) they work to identify unfairness / injustice / inequities at individual and systemic levels in order to effect change. With an “engaged neutrality” (McAllister), “...the ombuds aims to prevent damage and divisive conflicts from erupting on campus by providing an effective mechanism for the less powerful to safely voice concerns and seek solutions” ([Jane Morson](#))



[“The Lifelong Journey of Becoming an Ally”](#), Robin DiAngelo, Honors College Visiting Scholars Series, Perdue University, USA. 2021 [4 pages HANDOUT]

[“Indigenous Allyship Toolkit”](#). Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (HNHB LHIN, ON Canada), 2019 [12 pages]

[“Conceptualizing Allyship as an Actionable Construct in Higher Education”](#), Shannon Radford, Bridgewater State University, USA, 2018 [32 pages, academic article]

[“Interrupting Bias - Calling Out vs. Calling In”](#), Rebecca Eunmi Haslam, Seed the Way, 2018. [2 pages HANDOUT]

[“A Delicate Balance: The Role of the Ombuds in Resolving Campus Conflict”](#), Jane Morson, Higher Ed Jobs, November 7, 2016

[“Educating Allies”](#), Anne Bishop (NS, Canada) Book excerpts & Handouts, 2015

[“Bystander Training within Organizations”](#), Maureen Scully & Mary Rowe (University of Massachusetts Boston & MIT, USA), Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, 2009



[“9 Ted Talks that will make you a better ally: Thoughts on advocacy, accommodation, bias, intersectionality, and more”](#) (2021)



Various podcasts for allies: <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/antiracismresources/allies/podcasts>

Safe & Brave Spaces

What is a safe space?

“The term *safe space* has been used in various contexts in higher education—from movement-building, to academic theory, to student support services, as well as in the classroom. Although the origin of the term remains unclear, its many uses have ultimately centered on increasing the safety and visibility of marginalized or oppressed community members....” ([NASPA](#))

How is a brave space different from a safe space?

Brave spaces shifts the focus from safety (which may be illusory) to courage, while still encouraging discussion by participants around guidelines or “ground rules” for conversation. ([Arao & Clemens](#))

What about the concepts of moral courage & honest diversity?

Similar to the concept of brave spaces, Irshad Manji's [Moral Courage project](#) works with universities, schools, businesses, and libraries to promote what Manji calls "honest diversity," which challenges and offers an alternative to some common concepts in the EDI community such as [Dr. Robin DiAngelo's](#) conceptualisation of white privilege.

Are ombuds offices “safe spaces” or “brave spaces”?

“As ombuds, the field has created “brave spaces” for decades as individuals have been given access to confidentiality and neutrality. In this era of uncertainty for many, ombuds offices continue to offer this space and perhaps, do so with much more perspective and trust than other, newer forums.” ([Shannon Lynn Burton](#))



[“Challenging Conversations – Safe Spaces vs. Brave Spaces”](#) Heather M. Ross, *Educatus* blog, University of Saskatchewan (Canada), 2021

[“White Fragility Is Not the Answer. Honest Diversity Is.”](#) Irshad Manji (Canada), July 7, 2020

[“Safe Spaces & Brave Spaces”](#), *NASPA Policy & Practice Series Vol 1* (USA) 2017

[“From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A new way to frame dialogue around Diversity & Social Justice”](#) Brian Arao & Kristi Clemens (USA) 2013

[“Brave conversations: 5 step tipsheet”](#), University of California San Francisco, USA, undated

[“Ombudsing in the New Era”](#), Shannon Lynn Burton (Michigan State U.), *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association*, 2017



SOURCE: Blog from [The Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness \(GMCTL\)](#) at the University of Saskatchewan, CANADA.

How can I ensure that my office is seen as accessible and inclusive?

Here are 4 ways to build accessibility and inclusivity and welcome all members of the campus community (and beyond) to the ombuds office. Note: there are many resources available to support further learning, and we have only included one per concept:

- (1) **Universal design principles** – “UD is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.”
- (2) **Trauma informed practices** - see [Centre for Addition & Mental Health](#) “Trauma-informed practice is a broad approach to service delivery that applies the principles and practices highlighted below to all clients, regardless of trauma disclosure. Everyone in a clinical setting can practice in a trauma-informed way, even if trauma-specific treatment is not within their role.”
- (3) **Restorative approaches** - e.g., [Dalhousie](#) - “Restorative Justice is an approach used in situations that require a deep understanding of the harm done, the needs of those affected, and the strategies for moving forward as a community and creating lasting change.”
- (4) **Accessibility standards** – e.g., [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#) from Ombudsman Ontario which talks about use of assistive devices, communication, service animals, support persons, disruptions to service and staff training.

Microaggressions & Unconscious bias

What are microaggressions?

“Microaggressions are everyday comments or actions that subtly express a stereotype of, or prejudice towards, a marginalized group. Even if the intention was not to cause harm, microaggressions have a huge impact on an individual’s wellbeing...” ([Faculty of Medicine, U of T](#))

What is unconscious bias?

Unconscious bias refers to how our brains make sense of information in a quick way (our uncontrolled thoughts, feelings, judgements, assumptions, stereotypes), based on our life experiences, information, influences, actions, and others’ reactions. Also called implicit or cognitive bias. Unconscious bias training is often criticized for its *focus on the individual* and what they can do / not do, to counteract bias, while leaving out the role of *systemic sources of bias*.

What do ombuds need to know about unconscious bias?

As ombuds we are trained to reflect on our own biases in order to uphold a standard of impartiality in our everyday work, and in particular when doing investigations. Unconscious bias is a reminder to slow down even further, so that we can counteract the natural tendency of our brains to engage in shortcuts, assumptions, and guesses.



[Bias in Peer Review, online training module](#), Canada SSHRC, 2018-19



[19 min] [What is the science behind “unconscious bias”?](#), Video Wired, March 2021

[2 min] [Microaggressions are like mosquito bites](#), YouTube Fusion Comedy, 2018



[“Identity and Culture in Ombudsman Practice.”](#) Linda Brothers, Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 2014, 31: 421–434 [Note: the abstract mentions “strategies for isolating and decreasing unconscious ombudsman bias”, however we don’t have a link to the article]

Power & Privilege

What does white privilege refer to?

“As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage. ...White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” ([Peggy McIntosh](#))

“White privilege is not saying that as a white person your life hasn't been hard. White privilege is simply saying your skin colour hasn't been a contributing factor”. ([Black Lives Matter activist Emmanuel Acho](#))

What contributions might an ombuds have to the power/privilege conversation?

By examining institutional policies (by virtue of individual complaint reviews or own initiative investigations) that may have previously gone unquestioned, ombuds help to illuminate unfairness and inequities. Many ombuds would see their role as one that ‘speaks truth to power’.

As Rachel Vandana Stone notes,

“In higher education, this work [of dismantling notions of identity, privilege and power in higher education] involves unpicking and interrogating many assumptions that we take for granted about students. To what extent do our students feel they can claim their rightful “entitlements” at university, for example? In our book we talk about making university processes and rituals more transparent to students, asking them where (or to whom) they would go first for specific information about an assignment, for instance, and thus uncovering differences in student approaches and expectations which can then be addressed.”



[“W is for Whiteness in higher education”](#) Rachel Vandana Stone (UK, Sheffield Hallam University), WonkHE blog, June 23, 2021.

[“What is white privilege? the origins and meaning of the term used amid Black Lives Matter debate - and why it’s misunderstood”](#) Stephanie Randall (UK), September 7, 2020

[“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”](#) (Peggy McIntosh, 1989)

Interrupting Harm

What is cancelling / ghosting / boycotting / Othering?

“Canceling [sic] is an individual's volitional act of publicly rejecting and actively pursuing harm against a perceived transgressor... Canceling is similar in some respects to ghosting and boycotting, two other types of rejections. Like ghosting, the canceler desires to break their ties with the canceled entity. But unlike ghosting, the canceler also actively seeks to punish and harm them. Ghosting is private, passive rejection, whereas canceling is vigorous, public, retaliatory rejection. Boycotting usually applies to businesses and is about the withdrawal of financial support, such as making purchases.” ([Utpal Dholakia](#))

“Othering is not about liking or disliking someone. It is based on the conscious or unconscious assumption that a certain identified group poses a threat to the favoured group. It is largely driven by politicians and the media, as opposed to personal contact. Overwhelmingly, people do not “know” those that they are Othering.” ([John A. Powell](#))

What does it mean to call out / call in?

Calling *out* is about interrupting, “when we need to let someone know that their words or actions are unacceptable and will not be tolerated” ([Seed the Way](#)), whereas calling *in* is about seeking to understand someone’s words or actions – to reflect, rather than react, even if it is uncomfortable.

Can I call out / call in as an ombuds?

Many ombuds would probably say that they use “calling in” on a regular basis (i.e., trying to determine the intentions and interests behind word choices), and perhaps “calling out” less frequently, depending on personal and professional comfort levels (e.g., someone using swear words, or racist/sexist terminology).



[46:55] [“Why Scholar Loretta Ross Is 'Calling In' Callout Culture”](#), Interview, WBUR Boston’s NPR News Station (USA), December 3, 2020



[30 min] [Call it out – E-learning](#), Ontario Human Rights Commission, undated (post 2017)



[What Is Cancel Culture?](#), Utpal Dholakia (Rice University, Texas), Psychology Today, July 27, 2020

[Interrupting Bias: Calling out vs. Calling in](#), Dr. Rebecca Eunmi Haslam (USA), Seed the Way, 2018 [useful examples of how to ‘call in’]

[“Us vs. them: the sinister techniques of ‘Othering’ – and how to avoid them”](#) John A Powell (Director, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, University of California, Berkeley, USA), The Guardian, November 8, 2017.

Additional resources & ways to engage in EDI learning for ombuds

	<p>Update your social media feed</p> <p><i>Who /what are you following?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student groups on campus? • Canadian Centre for Diversity & Inclusion - Twitter: @CCDISocial • Human Rights Canada - Twitter: @CdnHumanRights • #BlackInTheIvory See: "How #Blackintheivory put a spotlight on racism in academia", 2020, Nature, by Nidhi Subbaraman
	<p>Make EDI a daily practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Diversity & Inclusion Journey: On the impact of including D&I principles in my Ombuds practice... (Sana Ansari Manjeshwar, Chevron's Global Office of Ombuds, undated) • 16 Steps To Incorporate Diversity, Equity And Inclusion Into Daily Operations (Forbes, August, 2020) • On the Road to Champion: Advice for how to become a diversity, equity and inclusion leader. (Deborah S. Willis, Inside Higher Ed, March 2018) • New Directions for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education (Ludmila Nunes, January 2021) - working groups to answer key EDI questions like : <i>How our department can become more thoughtful about our internal diversity messaging?</i> & <i>How can we change from seeing complaints as adversarial threats to valuing them as insights that can spark positive change?</i>
	<p>Enjoy a good BOOK</p> <p><i>Ask an ombuds colleague -what (else) are they reading?</i></p> <p>Join the ACCUO / IOA book club</p> <p><i>*read one of the articles referenced in this report</i></p>	<p>CANADA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alicia Elliott, A Mind Spread Out on the Ground, 2019 (ON) • The Equity Myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities, 2017 • Shakil Choudhury, Deep Diversity: Overcoming Us vs. Them, 2015 (Toronto) • Anne Bishop, Becoming an Ally, 1997/2015 (NS) <p>USA & World</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Ahmed, Complaint! (UK – coming Fall 2021) – based on informal and formal complaints about experiences of abuse, harassment and bullying within universities • Heather McGhee, The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone & How we can prosper together, 2021 • Cathy Park Hong, Minor Feelings: Asian American Reckoning, 2020 • Bassegy Ikpi, I'm Telling the Truth, but I'm Lying: Essays, 2019 (USA/Nigeria) • Jennifer Eberhardt, Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do, 2019 • Ijeoma Oluo, So You Want to Talk About Race, 2018 • Roxane Gay, Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body, 2017

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ta-Nehesi Coates, Between the World and Me, 2015
	Watch a VIDEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briser le code – videos on bias and white privilege [FR] • Les vidéos ironiques de "mon ami blanc" • Vidéo plainte : https://youtu.be/5B6M_DJBlpY • Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada April 2021 [1:07:00] - In this online lecture, Dr. Sheila Cote-Meek and Dr. Taima Moeke-Pickering explore the complexities of decolonization and indigenization of post-secondary institutions.
	Listen to a podcast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Key Podcast – Inside Higher Ed (USA) - 55 episodes • Diversonomics – Gowling WLG (Law firm – international) – series 2016-2020 • EDI and Canadian Post-Secondary - with Dr. Malinda Smith (Canada) [59:00]. • Brene Brown's podcasts (Dare to Lead; Unlocking Us) (USA) - guests often speak on EDI issues. • "Here to Slay" hosted by Roxane Gay and Tressie McMillan Cottom (USA) • The History of People of African Descent in Canada with Dr. Isaac Saney, Dalhousie U. [5:32] (note podcast is EN only, but FR transcript available)
	Participate in FREE EDI online training <i>What can you find of interest online? What is available through your institution?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UBC Activating Inclusion Toolkit – includes self-assessment, planning, and equitable decision-making tools • Training available through provincial Human Rights tribunals, e.g., Ontario Human Rights Commission, Human Rights 101 (2020) - Basic understanding of rights and responsibilities under the Ont. Human Rights Code; <i>Call it out</i> – 30 min interactive e-Course on racism, racial discrimination & human rights • www.humanrightscareers.com/magazine/3-free-online-courses-on-reconciliation-and-indigenous-education/[reference to 3 MOOC Massive open online courses in Canada] • Searchable tool for examples of EDI policies, practices, and research in Canadian universities: www.univcan.ca/priorities/equity-diversity-inclusion/edi-stories/ • Quebec InterUniversity EDI Network - Various resources: https://rqedu.com/en/resources/ (FR) • Alumni learning opportunities (e.g., “Principles of Belonging: An Introduction to EDI”, for UGuelph Alumni) • The story of slavery in Canada - Canadian Museum for Human Rights

	<p>Register for \$ EDI training</p> <p><i>NOTE: These options have not been vetted, nor are they endorsed by the authors or ACCUO</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Bakau Consulting (Canada) does really good training at a range of levels for those at the beginning of their journey of understanding all the way to making systemic changes.” ● “Dr Andrew B Campbell (Canada) - he speaks about racism, specifically in academia and education, and about unconscious bias.” ● Hadiya Roderique (Canada) – author of “Black on Bay Street” ● 2.5 hrs – 8 hrs - Anti-Racism Response Training - A.R.T. [google this –sessions are run through various organizations]. “Useful as an introduction to racism in Canada and ways in which one contributes to it and can interrupt it. Useful for Ombuds work when working EDI cases-i.e. understanding context and supportive of ADR processes offered by an Ombuds, i.e., how to address EDI issues when discharging an ADR intervention.” ● Black History Month (February) /Being Black in Canada resources/courses: “They were interesting but sometimes felt more surface level, and not a true reflection of the experiences of Black people.”
	<p>Training through your professional associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ACCUO / ENOHE / FCO ● IOA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging task force became official committee July 2021 ● EDI Office online discrimination training by the Association des Ombudsmans Universitaires du Québec (AOUQ) / ● Commission des droits de la personne du Québec (CDPDJ) ● www.capres.ca/dossiers/ 2 LGBTQ + training; Autism Spectrum Disorders in higher education. ● For ombuds who are members of regulated professions (e.g., lawyers / social workers), check out training available through your provincial law society or professional regulatory body