

## Supporting Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in your Research Group and Research Activities

### Five Easy-to-Take Action Items to Support EDI in Your Research Group

How can we create more inclusive environments which attract, retain, support and promote diverse research trainees? We are increasingly being asked to explain how we will do this (e.g. HQP section of an NSERC Discovery Grant). This document provides a list of simplified and actionable ways to get started. This is not a comprehensive list and further on you will see sections entitled “Supporting Equity,” “Supporting Diversity,” and “Supporting Inclusion,” where there are more detailed descriptions, with explanations of steps and actions that you can take.

To start - here are five easy steps you can take to support EDI in your research or lab group environment.

1. Implement a *Research Group Code of Conduct* – a brief document that each current and prospective group member is given. A Sample *Research Group Code of Conduct* is at the end of this document.
2. Make an unsolicited offer of flexibility with work location and time, to each group member, to accommodate those with varying personal and family responsibilities. Work to accommodate childcare, eldercare, community volunteering, and part-time employment, as it may pertain to students with varying socio-economic backgrounds.
3. Each winter, strongly encourage undergraduates who identify as women, Black, Indigenous, or from other equity-deserving groups (people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community), who you may teach or interact with to apply for URA and Masters positions. Ask your current group members to identify any candidates they may know through their social networks and TA/GA duties.
4. Put a statement about your commitment to EDI on your research website, preferably in a section of it aimed at prospective students, so that applicants understand that you value diversity and how you build that into your research group activities. A sample statement can be found at the end of this document.
5. Make it clear that you are willing to talk to any group members (or ask directly if appropriate) about any religious or cultural observance requirements, or family responsibilities. Ask how they can be accommodated to ensure the trainee can do their best work, and then intentionally accommodate them when planning group events, outings, or conference travel.

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### Background

Integrating the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into our research culture creates a framework that leads to an environment that welcomes all individuals, is fair to all participants, is legitimately merit-based, and supports a thriving research ecosystem by facilitating access to the largest possible talent pool. EDI-infused research cultures are derived from the awareness of those within the research culture, and particularly leaders, that there are obstacles and barriers that are experienced by members of equity-deserving groups and that actions to remove those barriers are our collective responsibility. EDI-centred research cultures seek to attract, retain and promote the most diverse and capable participants. Creation of EDI-infused research cultures increases participation, creativity and innovation while reducing group-think, homogeneity and exclusionary practices. Research has clearly established that EDI-infused research cultures lead to improved participation satisfaction and well-being as well as increased research outputs, increased innovation, creativity and productivity.

As per the Tri-Agency Statement on EDI, the stated commitment to “*Increasing equitable and inclusive participation in the research system, including on research teams*” and specific initiatives to achieve that, are a primary focus of Ryerson University. Individual PIs do not always receive EDI training, and yet there is a growing expectation, especially from NSERC, to show EDI competencies in our labs, and on our grant applications. Below is a more detailed list of suggestions that individual PIs may consider for implementation in their lab/research group, with brief explanations.

### Supporting Equity

- Implement a Research Group Code of Conduct. This should be a brief document that each current and prospective group member is given, and has a chance to discuss and ask questions about. The Code of Conduct should outline expectations of mutual respect, fair and collegial treatment, and policies towards harassment, aggression, and other types of misconduct. When giving the Code of Conduct to a new member, have a conversation about what *they* need in order to feel included, and how they can go about discussions and dealing with conflict should it arise. A sample Code of Conduct is included at the end of this document.
- In group meetings and discussions, ensure that all group members are given equal speaking time and not interrupted. Studies have shown that in professional group settings men are far more likely to interrupt and/or talk over women than *vice versa*. Consider intersectional aspects of group dynamics and help group members learn how to support each other. It is very important, especially given the supervisor-trainee dynamic, that group members are encouraged to speak and be heard. In group discussions, be conscious of speaking time, and manage the flow of the conversation accordingly.

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- In collaborative projects, ensure that administrative roles (note taking, sending reminders, organizing) are equitably distributed. Challenge gendered and other cultural stereotyping and help group members learn to do this for each other in respectful ways.
- When managing a group of multiple students, ensure that research projects are distributed in a fair and equitable way, with each eligible group member being considered and given a chance to express interest. Members of equity seeking groups may be less inclined to assert their preferences for certain research projects.
- Make an unsolicited offer of flexibility with work location and time to all current and prospective group members. Noting that family care responsibilities fall disproportionately upon women in our society, this flexibility can go a long way in enabling their further education. Furthermore, this type of policy also recognizes the different levels of family and personal responsibilities associated with varying socio-economic background and privilege.
- Consider how to make stipend/salaries as transparent and equitable as possible.
- Consider and discuss with your trainees potential applications of research in aid of historically marginalized or underrepresented communities. For example, are there applications of building science research that could be applied to benefit remote northern communities? Are there applications of digital communication technologies that could benefit persons with disabilities? These applications do not always exist depending on the field of study, but engaging in thoughtful discussion with trainees about them helps teach principles of equity in technology application.

### Supporting Diversity

- When a position for a research trainee (postdoc, grad student, or URA) becomes available in your group, craft an advertisement for wide distribution. Be sure to include a statement on the group's commitment to EDI and avoid using gendered language (ask the DFC for advice if necessary). Ensure position postings get widely distributed by sending to colleagues, posting it in research organization websites or newsletters, and asking your current trainees to distribute it in their network and on social media if they are comfortable doing so. Consider distributing your posting to some of the many organizations that support diverse science talent (e.g. [Science+](#), [Canadian Black Scientists Network](#), [SACNAS](#)). Provide an application deadline that is at least one month from the time of posting whenever possible.

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- Strongly encourage undergraduates from historically excluded groups, who you may teach or interact with to apply for URA and Masters positions. Undergraduates identifying as women, particularly those from historically excluded groups (including but not limited to women of colour, Indigenous women, disabled women), report feeling put off from applying due to a lack of personal contact with potential mentors. Think outside the box in terms of who might be a good candidate for a position.
- When reviewing an applicant's CV, take a moment to consider obstacles and barriers to accomplishment that could be masking a candidate's talent and potential. For example, it is well documented that journal manuscript reviews are harsher when the first author's first name is female. Therefore, a female applicant for a PhD position or postdoc may have fewer publications than a male counterpart with the same potential, talent and work ethic. There is no formula for how to consider these factors, but awareness of them can help you more acutely identify talent and potential. If there is any doubt, offer the candidate an interview (in person or video conference) and give them an opportunity to tell you about themselves and explain their journey. (Ask the DFC for more information or assistance if appropriate).
- Put a statement about EDI on your research website, preferably in a section of it aimed at prospective students, so that applicants understand that you value diversity and that you demonstrate these values through specific actions.
- Ensure that student committees are diverse and reflective of the broader community where possible. Some studies suggest that female-identifying graduate students report feeling intimidated at times by all white male committees, particularly if the student is from a racialized, minoritized demographic.

### Supporting Inclusion

- Ensuring that the physical space used by the research group is safe is an important aspect of inclusion. If some group members may need to work into the evening or over weekends. If they must work alone, ensure that the facility is safe via door locks, blue emergency button nearby, security cameras and other factors can help make group members feel safer in the lab. However, take into account that data indicate that most incidents occur between individuals who know each other so creating a culture that explicitly addresses workplace harassment and zero tolerance can set the tone for everyone. Long hours, late nights, weekends in the lab can be unsafe on many levels so discourage where possible. Similarly, trainees that need to work in the field should be appropriately supported and protected. For instance, young Black men working in urban environments should be particularly

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supported and protected. Discuss research (lab, field, etc.) safety and security with your trainees, and with either Ryerson Security or Ryerson Facilities if changes are needed. Conferences are known to be high risk environments for trainees, especially at events where alcohol is served (e.g. poster session with an open bar). Check in advance whether trainees might be at risk and make plans accordingly (e.g. buddy system, phone check-ins etc.).

- Given the prevalence and benefit of social gatherings, you may want ask and note dietary restrictions of your group members (vegan, halal, etc.), and provide suggestions and/or coordination to ensure that food and catering has appealing options for each group member. Consider these issues when planning to attend meetings or conferences elsewhere.
- Noting any religious or cultural observance requirements of each group member, and intentionally accommodating them, can also serve an atmosphere of inclusivity. If a group members observe a Sabbath, avoid scheduling social events that conflict with their observances. If a group member observes Ramadan, avoid scheduling events that may involve eating during that time. Create a culture of inclusivity, so that group members feel comfortable bringing forward these accommodations and if they don't, ask them respectfully.
- Make a conscious effort to seek out academic and industry collaborators who represent a broad cross section of society, including those from equity seeking groups, thereby providing additional inspiration and mentorship, and opportunities for allyship to your trainees. These efforts help foster an atmosphere of inclusion.
- Be reflective on and open to discussing privilege that you may have experienced along your academic journey. Showing self-awareness and reflection indicates to your trainees that you are cognizant of the differing privilege that individuals experience based on characteristics that are independent of ability to do science. Self-reflect as a group and supports an atmosphere of inclusivity and collective culture of care.

**This list of suggestions is by no means comprehensive. Every EDI plan is individual, context dependent and should developed by you, for your research group within your institutional context.**

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### Contact Information

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### Appendix: Sample EDI statement for a research website

(adapted from <https://dworkin.blog.ryerson.ca/graduate-studies>)

#### Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

The XXXXX Group is strongly committed to upholding the values of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Consistent with the [Tri-Agency Statement on EDI](#), and the [Dimensions Pilot Program at Ryerson](#), the XXXXX group will foster an environment in which all will feel comfortable, safe, supported, and free to speak their minds and pursue their research interests. The XXXXX group recognizes that the scientific research community and culture has been historically and continues to be exclusionary to traditionally underrepresented groups in STEM fields (those who identify as women, racialized, LGBTQ2S+, Indigenous, and/or people with disabilities). By acknowledging the challenges to equity, diversity and inclusion that exist in the academic research culture, we strive to identify and remove barriers to access to research opportunities and to attract, support, retain and promote the most diverse and inclusive research culture for all group members.

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## Appendix: Sample Group Code of Conduct

### Group Philosophy and Code of Conduct

*Performing Research with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)*

#### 1. Philosophy

We adopt a philosophy of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). This stems from the belief that increasing the intersections of identity in research can lead to wider understanding. To focus on integrating the principles of EDI into research culture is to take a step in the direction of more inclusive science, where the quality of teams and inclusion of teammates is a key factor and where outputs are enhanced. We strive for inclusive excellence. This research group will foster an environment in which all will feel comfortable, supported and free to speak their minds. One of the steps we are taking towards increased diversity and a stronger sense inclusion is the creation of this code of conduct which sets clear boundaries for all teammates - and is made in the awareness that scientific culture can be exclusionary to historically under-represented groups in STEM fields (women, racialized groups, 2SLGBTQ++, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities). By acknowledging the challenges to full EDI that exist in our field, we will recognize privilege, acknowledge the challenges faced by each group member, and intentionally take steps to improve our group's culture for all members.

#### 2. Code of Conduct

The code of conduct comprises the following points:

1. Group members shall respect each individual's ideas, ideologies, religions, culture, heritage, languages, and identity.
2. Group members shall advocate for each other (not being bystanders).
3. Multiple types of team bonding events are expected in this group (for differently abled people etc.) - mix of social, sporting, and others so that no one feels excluded from the group if they don't feel comfortable with a particular activity.
4. All group members shall strive to have clear communication with each other about expectations and conflicts - respecting each other and avoiding assumptions.
5. Group members shall ask if someone wants help before giving it, and remember that we all have things to learn from - and teach to each other.
6. Personal contact information that may be shared for research purposes will not be used for social purposes unless the team members give explicit consent.
7. Group members shall aim to maintain friendly professionalism.
8. Group members should actively learn about each others' experiences, using curiosity - not judgment - to be inclusive of the identities and backgrounds of others.
9. All discussions and conversation in the group should be in English, so everyone can participate.

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10. All forms of misconduct and harassment (including but not limited to sexual, physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, and prejudice) are not tolerated in the group, and they will be reported to the appropriate authority at Ryerson.

The Code of Conduct should contain information on the resources that are available to students on campus in support of EDI, including the [Office of the Vice President – Equity and Community Inclusion](#), the [Ryerson Consent Comes First Office](#), [Ryerson Human Rights Services](#), and [Ryerson Counselling](#).

*"This guide is intended to be a resource for you with suggestions and methods of supporting EDI in your SRC activities. Please feel free to use it as you see fit, and to whatever degree you feel comfortable."*

This Faculty of Science document was adapted, with permission, from a FEAS guide produced by Dr. Seth Dworkin, FEAS Dimensions Chair, supported by Nika Zolfaghari (editing and review), Dean Thomas Duever (support), Assoc. Dean Sri Krishnan (support, editing, and review), and Assoc. Dean Miljana Horvat (support and consultation). We appreciate their generous support.