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Equity Policy

Policy Information

Oversight Body:

Date Passed by Council: September 30, 2015; Amended
August 18, 2021

Date of Next Review: October 2023

Titled of Related Policies, Bylaws, Legislation:

Note: All terms will hold the same definition as outlined in the Dalhousie Student Union Constitution.

1. Preamble

The Dalhousie Student Union is committed in all its operations to creating equitable and inclusive environments free from harassment and discrimination. Creating inclusive and positive environments is a collective responsibility of all members of the Dalhousie Student Union, but in order to promote these aims, the following policy outlines actions that will be undertaken by the Dalhousie Student Union to actively challenge discrimination, harassment, and oppression.

2. Scope

This policy will apply to all executives, staff, volunteers, tenants, contractors, vendors, societies, and members of the Dalhousie Student Union. It also applies to all events, programming, businesses, and services of, or associated with, the Union.

3. Definitions

- a. Privilege is the unearned advantages extended to a dominant group in the form of cultural, economic, political, social and institutional rights— at the expense of marginalized groups. These advantages are actively reproduced through the normalization of the dominant group.
- b. Power is the ability to exercise control and/or having access to systems and resources considered legitimate by individuals and institutions.
- c. Oppression is the exercising of power over a marginalized group by a dominant group. Oppression is a systemic phenomenon that can manifest in individual or institutional actions.

d. Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual attention or solicitation which has the effect of interfering with an individual's participation, or which creates a negative emotional or psychological environment. This definition is not intended, nor should be understood to contradict, expand, or limit the definition of sexual harassment under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

4. Harassment and Discrimination

a. Pursuant to the Objectives of the Union, discrimination and harassment based on any and all grounds protected under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act will not be tolerated at any events sponsored by the Union or in any space operated by the Union.

b. Discrimination and harassment may take the form of:

- Barriers that prevent the members of the Union living with disabilities from participating in student union programming and activities;
- Remarks, including jokes or innuendos, that are based on racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, or transphobic sentiments;
- Promotional materials, events, or performances that use stereotypes based on any and all grounds protected under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act;
- Offensive comments and/or actions which demean, humiliate or threaten an individual or group;
- Printed or digital material, displays, and graffiti which demean, humiliate or threaten an individual or group; and
- Sexual harassment, including remarks, jokes or innuendoes about a person's body, attire, age, marital status, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation or perceived gender identity.

c. The Executive, Council and Board, in consultation with the Equity and Accessibility Office, are responsible for ensuring that the services, events, advocacy, campaigns and other programs of the Union represent the diversity of the Union's membership, including but not limited to, creating bylaws, policies, programmes, activities and groups that aim to ameliorate the conditions of marginalized communities including Indigenous students; racialized students; students with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer students; and women students.

5. Accommodations for Union Events and Activities

The Union shall include contact information on all promotional material for students wishing to seek accommodations for events and activities undertaken by the Union. The Union will undertake all reasonable efforts to meet accommodation needs within its control.

6. Equity Statement

In accordance with the aims of this policy, the following statement will be posted and/or read aloud to participants at all events of the Union:

Student union solidarity is based on the principle that all members should be able to participate equally in their union, recognizing that students have diverse experiences of privilege and marginalization. As members of the students' union, mutual respect, cooperation and understanding are our goals. We should neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity of any individual or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

It is our collective responsibility to create an inclusive space for discussion and dialogue. Any form or forms of discrimination and/or harassment will not be tolerated, nor will hate speech rooted in, but not limited to, sexist, racist, classist, ableist, homophobic or transphobic sentiments and/or remarks. We all have an obligation to ensure that an open and inclusive space, free of hate is established. If you violate this understanding, you will be asked to leave.

7. Complaints

- a. Members of the Union who believe the Union has in some way violated this policy can make a complaint to the Vice-President (Internal).
- b. If the complaint concerns the Vice-President (Internal), a complaint may be made to another member of the Executive.
- c. If the complaint concerns all members of the Executive, a complaint may be made to the Chair of Council or the Chair of the Executive Review Committee.
- d. The Vice-President (Internal) or appropriate recipient of the complaint shall convene a meeting with the complainant within fourteen (14) days. The Union will respond in writing to the complainant within fourteen (14) days of the meeting, including if the Union will take any further action.
- e. Actions the Union may take could include:
 - a public statement on behalf of the Union;
 - a change in policy or procedure;
 - a meeting with concerned parties; or
 - any other remedy that may from time to time be determined.
- e. Complaints will remain confidential unless the complainant permits disclosure.