Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee – Terms of Reference

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.

1) **Mandate** – The Department of Biological Sciences Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (DBS-EDI) is a standing, advisory committee that reaffirms the University's commitment to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. The EDI committee aims to ensure an inclusive environment for all members of the department, combat discrimination and all forms of bias - including unconscious bias - in the department, and provide equal access and opportunities for all members of the department. DBS Members can contribute feedback and ideas to the committee by contacting any current member of the committee and/or by responding to electronic solicitations of voluntary, anonymous feedback and ideas facilitated by the committee.

2) **Context** – formation of this committee stems from the University of Alberta's Institutional Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity and recommendations by the DBS's Respect, Equity, Accountability and Diversity (READ) working group that arose from the plan in 2021.

3) **Roles and Responsibilities**
   a) In order to support and promote the development of a more diverse and equitable department, the committee is accountable for:
      i) Facilitating the collection of voluntary, anonymous information on the attitudes and experiences of DBS constituents related to departmental culture over time
      ii) Identifying current barriers to EDI within DBS policies and culture, and recommending initiatives to address these issues
      iii) Identifying and creating opportunities to support and enhance EDI and combating discrimination and unconscious bias in DBS
      iv) Recommending and promoting opportunities for EDI training through special lectures, invited speakers, workshops, etc.
      v) Identifying, sharing and promoting EDI best practices: developing teaching, learning, research and working environments that encourage the prevention and elimination of discrimination, harassment, and victimization
      vi) Developing and maintaining EDI resources (including a DBS-EDI webpage)
      vii) Recommending EDI resources for inquiring constituents
      viii) Organizing and collaborating with groups on presentations in DBS on EDI themes
   b) The committee will recommend new deliverables for each year, but may include:
      i) Collating and promoting resources for DBS members to: find policies, procedures, and appropriate contacts within the University to address disputes (informally and

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      formally); promote learning regarding equity, diversity and inclusion; and disclose harassment, discrimination, or other concerning behaviours

    ii) Recommending that a minimum of one third of all seminar speakers invited to DBS represent underrepresented or minority groups

    iii) Highlighting successes by underrepresented DBS members in both scientific and EDI work and increasing advocacy for their professional advancement (e.g. through the encourage of nominations to awards and fellowships)

    iv) Offering resources and overseeing the implementation and development of EDI policies, plans, and strategies

    v) Voluntary tracking of representation in DBS to evaluate progress in EDI measures over time

c) The Members of the Committee are expected to:

    i) Attend and actively participate in at least 50% of meetings per year to remain in good standing

    ii) Inform the Committee Chair with regrets if they must miss a meeting

    iii) Strive to ensure representation/participation of federally designated and other equity-seeking groups

    iv) Sit as independent voices on the committee and not speak as representatives of a particular group

    v) Listen without judgment: foster a safe space to share and learn from others

    vi) Respect requests for discretion in discussing matters raised by the committee or DBS constituents outside of the committee

4) Committee Composition & Membership

a) *Committee Chair (1)*, who will be a current DBS faculty member and is expected to:

    i) Appoint committee members, including the Committee Vice-Chair (see below)

    ii) Liaise with other EDI committees throughout U of A to inform DBS policies and aid in guidance to DBS Executive and Council

    iii) Develop meeting agendas and supporting papers in consultation with committee members, which will be provided to the Committee Vice-Chair for distribution

    iv) Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and be heard at meetings

    v) Guide committee members to work toward common goals

    vi) Mediate conflict and misunderstandings between committee members

    vii) Oversees the formation of working groups when required (see below)

b) *Committee Vice-Chair (1)*, who must be a faculty or staff member of DBS appointed from the DBS-EDI Members at Large by the Committee Chair

c) *Ex-officio Non-voting (2) members,* specifically a member of the *DBS Executive Council* who will assist with liaising between the Executive Council and EDI-DBS Committee and a *DBS representative on the Faculty of Science Engagement and EDI committee* who will inform the EDI-DBS Committee of relevant activities and information from the Faculty of Science Engagement and EDI committee, and vice versa

d) *Appointed Members at Large (11)*

    i) Faculty (3) and staff members (2) are appointed for 3 year terms of service.

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ii) Post-doctoral fellow (2), graduate student (2) and undergraduate student (2) members are appointed for a minimum 1-year term of service with the opportunity to voluntarily serve a second year (with a maximum of a 2-year term of service)

e) **Selection.** The Committee will review and make recommendations on newly recruited members in response to vacancies on the Committee. The DBS Department Chair will vet recommended members for final selection and appointment by the Committee Chair. Selection procedures will also include:

i) Annual review of the available positions (with a goal of maintaining the continuity of committee membership, and maintaining or increasing representation across DBS constituents).

ii) The committee will make a general call to all DBS members for expressions of interest in membership. Expressions of interest should contain information about the individual's interest in participating and any pertinent background information on their experiences with committee guiding principles (equity, diversity, inclusion, equality, intersectionality, accessibility, and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples)

f) The committee's membership, in the form of a list of individuals currently serving, will be kept current and made accessible to all members of DBS via the EDI-DBS website and DBS internal server

g) Membership on this committee will be recognized as departmental service

5) Responsibilities Additional to Delegated Authority

a) **Working Groups** - when necessary, the committee may organize ad hoc working groups to address single, time-limited special topics, tasks, or projects

i) A member of the committee must act as the working group chair

ii) The working group chair will recruit working group members from the DBS-EDI committee, but may also include other departmental members

iii) The working group chair is expected to perform similar duties as the Committee Chair (see above) in the context of working group activities

iv) Participation on working groups will be recognized as departmental service

6) Meetings

a) All meetings will be led by the Committee Chair unless absent, wherein the Committee Vice-Chair will serve in this capacity

b) Meetings will be held at least quarterly as called by the Committee Chair at a time and location (virtual or hybrid) determined and communicated by the Committee Chair at least a week in advance

i) Committee members can call for meetings as needed (i.e. special presentations) through communication with the Committee Chair, who will arrange and schedule such additional meetings

c) A meeting quorum will require 50% of voting members of the committee to be present

d) Members will work toward a consensus model for decision making, if this is not possible a simple majority vote will be held

e) Meeting agendas and minutes will be provided by the Committee Vice-Chair. This includes:

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- o Distributing agendas to the committee via e-mail and a Google Drive shared by committee members at least 3 days prior to the meeting
- o Agendas will include a space for "Other Business"
- o Preparing minutes, which will be archived in a Google Drive shared by committee members
- o Minutes will document Action Items
- o If the Committee Vice-Chair is absent from the meeting, the Committee Chair will appoint an interim note taker who will manage minutes for only that committee meeting
- o Minutes will not be voted upon at future meetings, but instead will be archived in the committee Google Drive. Should a committee member find an error in the minutes, it should be pointed out to the Committee Chair and then either resolved through email or at the next meeting

   f) DBS Resources for the committee will include:
   i) Meeting space
   ii) Assistance from DBS officials in sending out calls for committee membership nominations, information on resources and events, and collection of voluntary information and feedback from DBS members

   g) Guests may attend committee meetings with prior written approval of its Committee Chair or the majority of committee members

7) **Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest.** Committee members commit to not sharing issues or anecdotes outside of the committee without written permission of committee members and/or guests. Members will abstain from voting on topics when they may be perceived to be in Conflict of Interest as defined by Tri-Council for Review Committee Members. See: **https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/interagency-research-funding/policies-and-guidelines/conflict-interest-and-confidentiality**

8) **Accountability and reporting relationship - Reporting to DBS Council.** The committee will report to the DBS Council at least annually with respect to its activities and decisions.

9) **Definitions.** For comprehensive definitions, please refer to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion Glossary of Terms. For definitions as defined by the U of A, please refer to U of A Guiding Principles for EDI. Within this Terms of Reference are the additional definitions:
   - Committee refers to the DBS-EDI committee
   - Committee Chair refers to the DBS-EDI committee chair
   - DBS refers to the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Alberta
   - EDI refers to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
   - Equity (as defined by the University of Alberta) refers to fairness in access to education and employment and in the opportunity to succeed in these domains
   - Executive refers to the DBS head group that supervises it's activities and organization

- Diversity (as defined by the University of Alberta) refers to difference or variety - particularly referring to demographic or identity
- Discrimination refers to an intentional or unintentional prejudice towards groups based on perceived characteristics referenced in the protected grounds i.e. sex, race, sexual identity, gender identity, and disability
- FoS refers to Faculty of Science at University of Alberta
- Inclusion (as defined by the University of Alberta) refers to valuing and cultivating full and meaningful engagement of historically and structurally excluded individuals and groups
- READ refers to Respect, Equity, Accountability, and Diversity, a predecessor working group in DBS that recommended a formal DBS-EDI committee be formed
- Statement of Shared Belief refers to a DBS document created by the READ working group outlining DBS views regarding EDI
- U of A refers to the University of Alberta

10) Appendices:
   a) Mandate principles (modified from U of A strategic plan for EDI HERE)
   b) University of Alberta Strategic Plan for EDI (LINK)
   c) University of Alberta definitions (LINK)
   d) Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion Glossary of Terms (LINK)

11) These Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by the DBS-EDI committee and DBS Council. Terms of Reference will be reviewed by this Committee every three years and the results of this review will be documented and ratified at DBS Council.
   a) This Terms of Reference was last Approved on December 14, 2022