

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY: PLANS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

*September 2012*

**The University and the Department**

1. The University has drafted an *Equity and Diversity Strategic Plan*, which may be consulted at <http://diversity.ubc.ca>. The *Plan*, 'Valuing Difference'. frames equity and diversity as central to academic excellence — in teaching, research, scholarship, and service. The *Plan* engages with substantive equality: the celebration of (not merely toleration of) difference, the inclusion of historically and currently marginalized voices, the elimination of symbolic and material discrimination, and the rectification of unfair and disrespectful outcomes. The *Plan* also recognizes that systemic discrimination and exclusion are encoded in our institution's policies, practices, traditions, and procedures. It argues that these must be addressed, as well as individual acts of discrimination, in order for equity plans to be effective. Finally, the *Plan* calls upon all members of the University community to dismantle injustices and systemic barriers to the full and equal participation and success in Canadian society of equity-seeking groups, including women, visible minorities, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

2. The objective of the Department of Geography's Plans, Policies and Procedures on Equity and Diversity is to implement the proposals and policies outlined in the University's *Strategic Plan*. Much of what any Department can do is necessarily framed by the University's policies and procedures, and there are many issues – including, for example, undergraduate admissions – over which a Department exercises little or no control. But it is important to recognize that there is a two-way channel so that as a Department we should not only respond to University initiatives and directives but also **bring initiatives and proposals to the Faculty and the University for consideration and implementation**. We can also **learn from initiatives elsewhere**, notably the stream of reports produced by UBC's Faculty of Science on Diversity and Working Climate – see <http://www.science.ubc.ca/faculty/diversity>.

3. The Department is bound by the *Strategic Plan* to recognize that equity and diversity are not abstract goals, and is therefore committed to implementing **effective strategies** that

(a) enable students, staff and faculty to study and work in an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and prejudice, and in a community where their rights, abilities and contributions are recognized and respected;

(b) support the participation of the widest range of perspectives and voices in its collective research, learning and working.

### The Department of Geography: Equity and Diversity Committee

**4. Composition:** The Equity & Diversity Committee consists *at a minimum* of three continuing faculty representative of different ranks; one member of staff; two graduate students elected by the graduate student body; and two undergraduates appointed by the Geography Students Association. The Committee may also invite additional members, including Sessional Instructors and Post-Doctoral Fellows. The composition of the Committee – like all committees – should take into account the need for adequate representation of different genders, ethnicities, etc.

**5. Mandate:** The Equity & Diversity Committee:

(a) develops relevant plans, policies and procedures for decision by the Department Meeting;

(b) monitors Departmental progress towards the goals of the University's Equity and Diversity Strategic Plan, and publishes an annual report for members of the Department;

(c) facilitates relevant workshops, seminars and discussions;

(d) provides an informal resolution process for anyone who makes a complaint to the Department about equity or diversity issues;

(e) helps individuals access other relevant resources and offices, including Access and Diversity (<http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/index.cfm>), Aboriginal Student Affairs (<http://students.arts.ubc.ca/academic-planning-advising/advising/aboriginal-student-affairs.html>), and the Equity Office (<http://equity.ubc.ca>) if they wish to initiate a formal complaint.

**6.** It is important to understand that the development and realization of the objectives of the University's Strategic Plan is **the responsibility of all members of the Department**. This implies that questions of equity and diversity need to thread their way through the work of all department committees, so that, for example, these issues may be raised in any committee or department meeting and graduate students should be able to raise these (and other) issues at regular meetings of the Graduate Committee. In subsequent sections individuals and committees primarily responsible for particular issues have been identified, but the recognition of multiple responsibilities runs the risk of everyone assuming that someone else will take the lead: these should therefore be read as an invitation for committees to work together.

7. **Transparency and accountability** are fundamental to the development of both equity and diversity, and this rests upon democratic forms of governance. To that end, all members of the Department should have intranet access to the agenda and non-confidential minutes of all department committees.

8. In conformity with current practice, the Department Plan that follows distinguishes between **Educational Equity and Diversity** and **Employment Equity and Diversity**, though the two are linked. In particular, the Equity & Diversity Committee provides an informal means of resolving complaints in relation to all matters of equity and diversity (paragraph 9) and conducts audits of the Department and its facilities in accordance with the objectives of the Plan (paragraph 10). It is also directly involved in fostering a climate in which respect for equity and diversity becomes second nature in both education and employment within the Department (paragraph 11).

9. The Department provides **an informal means of mediating complaints in relation to Equity and Diversity** from students, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, staff and faculty. This process is to be initiated in the strictest confidence by the Chair of the Equity & Diversity Committee or another faculty member designated by the Head. This is not intended to undermine the rights of complainants to seek formal resolution of their complaints through the UBC Equity Office or other means.

10. The Department conducts:

**(a) an annual audit of the Department's diversity profile**

*[Responsibility: Head, Chair of Equity & Diversity Committee]; and*

**(b) a bi-annual audit of the physical accessibility of the building and related facilities**, in conjunction with Access & Diversity's Disability Resource Centre, to include (minimally) wheelchair access to the building and washrooms, emergency exits, elevators, and special provisions for those with visual, hearing and other disabilities, and washroom access for those with small children, and for transgender people.

*[Responsibility: Chair of Building, Equipment and Safety Committee]*

11. **Climate change:** The University's *Strategic Plan* makes it clear that we aim to be 'a community that values respect for all others, even those with whom we disagree fundamentally' and that the (necessary) debate of controversial issues 'can scarcely occur when, for example, some members of the community are made to feel marginalized or even personally attacked, not for their ideas but for their very identity.' These claims are scarcely foreign to geography: the discipline is alive with discussions of these issues, they are the substance of many of our classes, and several instructors have developed pedagogical practices that inculcate an inclusive, respectful and collaborative mode of engagement. But translating ideas into practice is far from straightforward. In particular, we need to recognize that these values extend beyond conduct in the classroom; they should guide all interactions between members of the Department, and they relate directly to employment as well as educational equity and diversity. For that reason, the

Department must develop an awareness of the multiple ways in which a ‘chilly climate’ can be produced, and of the ways in which – no matter how sharp our critical faculties – unconscious bias can still intrude on our everyday practices. UBC’s SMART Working Group notes that ‘social science researchers have investigated “unconscious bias” in academic settings, and found significant, systemic gender biases that affect perceptions of performance, which may in turn affect discretionary pay awards, as well as research awards’ (p. 5). It is unlikely that this problem is confined to gender.

12. The Equity & Diversity Committee therefore recommends:

(i) the inclusion of equity and diversity issues in an Orientation Program for new graduate students every September;

*[Responsibility: Chair, Graduate Committee]*

(ii) the development of a series of Department **workshops and discussions** on ‘climate change’ to address:

- (a) climate in the classroom;
- (b) equity, diversity and unconscious bias in governance and decision-making;
- (c) equity, diversity and unconscious bias in hiring, tenure and promotion, workload and award decisions.

Relevant workshops should be developed by faculty, graduate students and staff together, and appropriate resources and research should be made available online and in the GIC.

*[Responsibility: Head, Chairs of Curriculum Committee and Equity & Diversity Committee, Departmental Administrator]*

### **Educational equity and diversity**

13. The first objective of the Department Plan in relation to Educational Equity and Diversity is **to encourage and increase awareness of Equity and Diversity issues by:**

(a) including equity and diversity issues in the **undergraduate and graduate curriculum**, and facilitating the development of appropriate courses, classes and seminars;

*[Responsibility: Chairs of Equity & Diversity Committee, Curriculum Committee, Graduate Committee]*

(b) developing a clear and detailed statement of **undergraduate students’ rights and responsibilities**, particularly in relation to respecting equity and diversity in the classroom, on campus and during any University-related activity;

*[Responsibility: Head, Chairs of Equity & Diversity Committee, Curriculum Committee]*

(c) developing a clear and detailed statement of **graduate students' rights and responsibilities**, parallel to 13 (b) above, and also including their relationship with their supervisors and the right to change supervisors;

*[Responsibility: Chair of Graduate Committee]*

(d) ensuring that **colloquia** reflect the Department's commitment to diversity by arranging presentations that address these issues and ensuring that presenters are themselves reasonably diverse

*[Responsibility: Chairs of Colloquium Committee]*

(e) arranging a bi-annual presentation from the University Equity Office to address core issues and to explain the services provided by the office

*[Responsibility: Chair of Equity & Diversity Committee]*

(f) posting the Department's Equity & Diversity: Plans, policies and procedures on the Department website

*[Responsibility: Chair of Equity & Diversity Committee]*

**14.** The second objective of the Department Plan in relation to Educational Equity and Diversity is **to develop long-term measures for increasing diversity among students and faculty by:**

(a) identifying and encouraging undergraduate students from minority, disadvantaged or under-represented groups to consider further academic study;

*[Responsibility: All instructors]*

(b) developing funding opportunities and scholarships that will help diversify the graduate study body;

*[Responsibility: Head, Chairs of Equity & Diversity Committee, Graduate Committee]*

(c) developing a long-term strategy to diversify the faculty consistent with the criteria and procedures used for appointments, reappointments, tenure and promotion as specified in the Collective Agreement between the University and the Faculty Association;

*[Responsibility: Head, Chair of Equity & Diversity Committee]*

**15.** The Equity & Diversity Committee recommends prioritizing two initiatives for 2012-15:

**(I) Fostering connections with our neighbor, the First Nations House of Learning;** First Nations issues are addressed in several courses, but consideration should also be given to participation in the Faculty of Arts' First Nations Study Program and to

producing materials for First Nations students showing how courses in Geography can contribute to the realization of their goals, especially in supporting their own communities.

(II) Facilitating the participation of students from the **global South** in the graduate program, by:

- fostering the development of **networks of research collaboration** with universities in the global South;
- organizing a **Summer Institute** with scholars (faculty and graduate students) from the global South;
- establishing **faculty consortia** in which groups of faculty pool research resources to guarantee financial support for a designated student from the global South;
- developing a formal one-year **Residency or Fellowship program** for graduate students from the global South (who would be able to take coursework as well as undertake research during their stay).

The Committee recommends the establishment of a Working Group in conjunction with the Graduate Committee to further these objectives.

**16.** These initiatives should be followed by other, targeted initiatives that will further the objectives of equity and diversity. Important areas include recruiting and supporting undergraduates who are economically disadvantaged, and fostering a supportive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

### **Employment Equity and Diversity**

**17.** Canada's Employment Equity Act mandates the fair treatment of four designated groups in hiring and advancement policy: women; persons with disabilities; visible minorities; and people of Aboriginal descent. Although the Act applies only to federally regulated institutions – and so does not apply to universities – it is helpful to recognize the claims advanced by these groups. It is equally important not to confine the Plan to these groups and to recognize the claims of other equity-seeking groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (see paragraph (1)).

**18. Employee Groups:** Conditions of staff employment are established through three employee groups, the clerical and secretarial union, CUPE 2950, the trades and technical union, CUPE 116, and the Management and Professional group. Conditions of faculty employment are set by the Agreement on the Framework for Collective Bargaining between the University and the Faculty Association. Sessional lecturers are hired to teach individual courses, also subject to that Collective Agreement. The Department also employs graduate students as Teaching Assistants, and these students are represented by

CUPE 2278. Individual faculty members employ students as Research Assistants and also extend contracts to Post-doctoral Fellows and Research Associates.

**19.** The first objective of the Department Plan in relation to Employment Equity and Diversity is to **review employment policies and practices for potential discriminatory effect on members of equity-seeking groups, to design and implement policies and practices to support employment opportunities for members of those groups, and to develop special measures and reasonable accommodations to achieve and maintain a work force representative of the qualified applicant pools. Any policies and practices are subject and subordinate to the agreements and provisions specified in (18) above.**

**20.** In relation to both staff and faculty employment, all advertisements are made in accordance with University guidelines and use gender-neutral language.

*[Responsibility: Head, Chairs of Search Committees, Administrator]*

**22.** It is vitally important for search and selection committees to make every effort to solicit the widest possible applicant pool, and to be aware of the possibility of unconscious bias in their reading of applications and conduct of interviews (see 10(b) above). All search committees must be briefed on equity issues, and all recommendations to the Head and Department Committee for initial appointment must be accompanied by a clear statement of the steps taken to ensure that these objectives and principles have been met.

*[Responsibility: Head, Chairs of Search Committees, Administrator]*

**23.** The second objective of the Department plan in relation to Employment Equity and Diversity is to **support work/life balance across the Department, to develop measures to ensure equitable workloads and to enhance productivity and/or advancement of employees.**

**24.** Staff members are encouraged by the Administrator member to identify areas of future career interest and ways of encouraging productivity. The Department uses available professional development funds to meet staff needs.

*[Responsibility: Head, Administrator]*

**25.** Faculty are required to prepare an Annual Report to the Faculty of Arts which is made available to all faculty within the Department and is discussed in individual meetings with the Head (Annual Reviews).

**26.** The Department elects a committee each year to evaluate those Annual Reports and to advise the Head on **Merit and Performance Salary Adjustment (PSA)** recommendations. It consists of one Professor, one Associate Professor and one Assistant Professor/Senior Instructor/Instructor.

*[Responsibility: Head]*

**27.** Teaching allocations are made by the Head, who invites faculty to nominate their preferred courses each year. The standard teaching load for full-time faculty is 9 credits each year (though this may be averaged over several years); for holders of Canada Research Chairs the standard teaching load is 7.5 credits each year (which may also be averaged over several years). Reductions are also made for special responsibilities, in particular for the Head and the Chair of the Graduate Committee (who is also the Graduate Adviser). The Head, in conjunction with the Chair of the Curriculum Committee, should ensure an equitable rotation of courses (especially for large classes).

*[Responsibility: Head]*

**28.** Faculty may request **peer reviews of their teaching**, which is arranged through the Department's Teaching Evaluation Committee and follows an agreed protocol; in accordance with University policy this is mandatory for those seeking tenure and/or promotion.

*[Responsibility: Teaching Evaluation Committee]*

**29.** Faculty have been remarkably successful in securing **research funding**, but the matrix of opportunity is constantly changing. Announcements of major initiatives are well publicized, but not always with sufficient lead-time to develop viable proposals. The Department can do little about this state of affairs, but it can and should pool its expertise more effectively: we need to share successful research proposals, to advise one another on our applications, and to conduct regular workshops for advanced graduate students and junior faculty on writing grant applications. Graduate students receive some of these benefits through the Professional Development Seminars, but we could do much more to advance **faculty professional development** through similar workshops.

*[Responsibility: Head]*

**30.** Many **administrative duties and responsibilities** devolve upon the faculty, and the chairs and members of these committees should rotate regularly with due regard for equity and diversity. Particular care must be taken to ensure an equitable division of labour, recognizing that administrative duties are not confined to service on Departmental committees.

*[Responsibility: Head]*

**31.** All **non-tenured faculty** are assigned two senior faculty to advise and support them through the **tenure and promotion** process. The Head is required to appoint a Departmental Mentor (in consultation with the new appointee) and a Full or Associate Professor to serve as a member of the Department's Promotion & Tenure Review Committee. The Mentor assists the non-tenured colleague in envisioning his/her career

trajectory and offers advice preparing a curriculum vitae and a teaching dossier, preparing and placing scholarly contributions, developing teaching and administrative competencies and selecting prospective referees. Each year the Review Panel member reads the non-tenured colleague's Annual Report and scholarly publications, and reviews his/her teaching evaluations. Those two senior colleagues then meet with the Head to discuss the non-tenured colleague's career development and to prepare a written assessment; a copy of that assessment is provided to the non-tenured colleague, who may respond in writing with a copy to be placed in his/her personnel file.

*[Responsibility: Head]*

**32.** The Department has instituted a comparable process to advise and support **Associate Professors** in planning and preparing for promotion to Full Professor.

**33.** The promotion and tenure process for all candidates follows the formal guidelines established by the University: see in particular Article 5 (Procedures for Appointment, Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion) of the Agreement on Conditions of Appointment for Faculty at <http://www.hr.ubc.ca/faculty-relations/collective-agreements/appointment-faculty/#5> and the SAC [Senior Appointments Committee] Guide. By their very nature these formal guidelines can do little to reduce the stress experienced by non-tenured faculty members. It is particularly important for **expectations** to be equitable, reasonable and transparent. It is no less important for all members of the Departmental Promotion & Tenure Committee to be briefed on the criteria involved and on the intrusion of unconscious bias into promotion and tenure decisions (see SMART Report, p. 11).

*[Responsibility: Head]*

**34.** The Department is committed to achieve equity with respect to measures of career success and recognition, including time to and rate of promotion, allocation of retention resources, and receipt of awards. Success rests on the Department's explicit commitment to achieving these goals. To this end, the Head and relevant committees should develop an awareness of existing research regarding the production and reproduction of inequality in the academy in general and the discipline of geography in particular.