



Unite! Diversity & Inclusion Glossary

The purpose of this glossary is to help the Unite! community get a better understanding of central concepts within the field of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility, and of terminology used in Unite's Diversity & Inclusion Charter.

This glossary is a living document and will be updated regularly.

Accessibility

Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. It encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings. Accessibility is not just about the physical environment: it is about access to and representation in content for all. Our understanding of accessibility includes the legal definitions and provisions of UE and National Laws

Anti-Discrimination

Anti-discrimination encompasses principles, laws and policies that combat unfair and inequitable treatment based on individual or ascribed characteristics.

It aims to provide equitable opportunities and fair treatment regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, and more.

By tackling structural discrimination, anti-discrimination policies target all areas of life so that all individuals are guaranteed equal rights, opportunities and dignity, regardless of their background or characteristics.



Discrimination

[EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)

Article 21 - Non-discrimination

1. Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

2. Within the scope of application of the Treaties and without prejudice to any of their specific provisions, any discrimination on grounds of nationality shall be prohibited.

Discrimination occurs when prejudiced attitudes and beliefs lead to unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups. It involves actions or behaviors that deny, or limit opportunities, rights, or privileges based on actual or attributed membership to a social group or category. Discrimination commonly appears and is expressed through actions, regulations and legislation but also through (active) denial and ignorance. Inadequate accessibility, harassment, sexual harassment and instructions to discriminate are also forms of discrimination.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect, and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors often stem from the foundation laid by stereotypes and prejudice.

Diversity

Diversity implies the individual differences and person specific attributes within a social group and between social groups. The term includes but is not limited to aspects, such as gender, race/ethnicity, religion, age, abilities/disability or education, social class, and sexual orientation. Diversity does not abolish or fixate on differences but seeks for appreciative dealing with the dialectical interrelation of equality in difference and difference in equality.

Because differences must not determine more or fewer opportunities for participation and recognition, wellbeing and safety, diversity as a concept has to be led by the principle of anti-discrimination.



Diversity mainstream

Diversity mainstream refers to the integration of diversity and inclusion principles, practices, and perspectives into the core or mainstream activities, policies, and cultures of organizations, communities, or societies. This concept emphasizes that diversity is not an isolated or separate aspect, but rather an integral part of how things are done and how decisions are made. When diversity is mainstreamed, it is not treated as an add-on or an afterthought, but rather as a fundamental and essential component of any functioning system.

In the context of workplaces, for example, diversity mainstreaming means that diversity and inclusion efforts are embedded into all aspects of the organization's operations, from recruitment and hiring to employee development, decision-making, and leadership. Similarly, in broader social contexts, diversity mainstreaming implies that diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and needs are considered in policy-making, educational curricula, media representation, and other influential areas of society.

Overall, diversity mainstreaming aims to create environments where differences are valued, respected, and integrated, leading to more equitable and inclusive outcomes for everyone involved.

Equity

Equity refers to the concept of fairness, justice, and impartiality in providing opportunities, resources, and treatment to individuals or groups, particularly within a social, economic, or educational context. Unlike equality, which treats everyone the same regardless of their starting point or needs, equity recognizes and addresses the fact that people have different circumstances, advantages, and disadvantages that may require varying levels of support to achieve a level playing field.

In essence, equity involves ensuring that individuals or groups have access to the resources, opportunities, and support they need to overcome systemic barriers and achieve similar outcomes as others. This might involve redistributing resources, providing additional assistance to marginalized or disadvantaged groups, and actively working to eliminate unfair advantages or disadvantages that result from historical or systemic factors.



Equity strives to create a more just and inclusive society by acknowledging and addressing the unequal starting points and systemic biases that can lead to disparities in outcomes. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing the root causes of inequality to promote greater social and economic fairness.

Direct and indirect Discrimination

Direct discrimination: Situations where individuals are treated less favorably based on certain protected characteristics, such as race, gender, age, disability, religion, or sexual orientation. Examples are:

- Job advertisements with discriminating age limits.
- Providing unequal access to facilities, resources, or amenities to students and staff with disabilities.
- Openly favoring or disfavoring students based on their race, gender, or other protected characteristics during class discussions, grading, or participation.

Indirect Discrimination: More subtle forms of unjust treatment, which may not be intentional, resulting from seemingly neutral rules, practices, or policies that have a disproportionately negative impact on individuals from certain protected groups.

Examples are:

- Designing class schedules that predominantly favor students who have full-time availability during standard working hours can indirectly discriminate against individuals with caregiving responsibilities or part-time jobs.
- A pervasive heteronormative environment within higher education institutions can indirectly discriminate against queer students and staff.
- Favoring certain fields of study over others, limiting resources for research on topics relevant to underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, race, sexuality, social justice).

Harassment

Harassment is the act of engaging in unwelcome conduct with the intent to violate the dignity of another person, resulting in an atmosphere of intimidation, hostility, degradation, humiliation or offense. It encompasses various acts that undermine the dignity of an individual on the basis of discriminatory factors, including making



absurd or derogatory generalizations about individuals of certain religions, sexual orientations, ages, or other characteristics.

Inclusion

All tasks and efforts (a process) of actively transforming, adapting and changing existing structures in order to enable equitable participation, including decision making, of all individuals and groups within an institution for truly democratic living, learning and working conditions. While a truly inclusive group is necessarily diverse, a diverse group may or may not be inclusive.

Marginalised groups

Groups of people within a given culture, context and history at risk of being subjected to multiple discrimination due to the interplay of different personal characteristics or grounds, such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education or income, or living in various geographic localities. These groups have been historically disempowered and oppressed.

In the workplace, the person or group that perpetuates marginalization is likely one that is influential and holds power. The person or group that is marginalized are likely disempowered and lack the necessary influence to contest their marginalization. It's interconnected with questions of lack of representation.

Prejudice

Prejudice is the holding of negative preconceived opinions, attitudes, or feelings about individuals or groups based on stereotypes. It can manifest itself as bias, hostility, or mistrust.

Prejudice reinforces stereotypes by confirming existing beliefs and validating discriminatory attitudes. People may selectively focus on information that confirms their preconceptions and ignore evidence that contradicts their biases.

In addition, prejudice can motivate discriminatory behavior. When individuals hold prejudiced views, they may act on them by treating others unfairly or unequally.



Representation

Representation is about seeing people of all backgrounds making meaningful contributions throughout every level within our organization. While diversity is about bringing together people from all walks of life, representation ensures that these diverse persons—and their viewpoints—can be found or depicted across all departments and seniority levels within an organization.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are generalizations or assumptions made about individuals or groups based on their perceived characteristics. They significantly influence how individuals perceive and categorize others, often resulting in a simplified and distorted view of a particular group. This simplified view can sometimes emphasize negative characteristics or perpetuate misconceptions.

Stereotypes contribute to the formation of prejudiced attitudes and beliefs. When people internalize stereotypes, they may develop biased views, leading to prejudiced feelings and opinions about individuals or groups.

Structural Discrimination

Structural discrimination is the presence and interweaving of discrimination at the individual, cultural and institutional levels.

- Individual Discrimination: Personal prejudiced behavior and attitudes directed against people and social groups.
- Cultural Discrimination: Social roles, norms, music, art, literature, rituals, language, in which social exclusion and dominance is expressed.
- Institutional Discrimination: Policies, laws, rules, norms enforced and executed by organizations and social institutions (administrations, governments, judiciary, church, health system, education system...) that disadvantage some and favor other social groups.



Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment encompasses various forms of unwelcome behavior with the intention or consequence of undermining an individual's dignity. It involves any unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which occurs specifically to create an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive. This can manifest through actions such as inappropriate touches, suggestive remarks, lewd glances, sexually alluding visuals, and jokes that degrade a person. For instance, it includes touching someone's body in a manner that is perceived as unpleasant or making comments that are unwanted and perceived as derogatory in nature.

Victimisation

The action of singling someone out for cruel or unjust treatment. It involves the victimization of an individual or group by another individual, group, or even a system or institution. Victimization can take various forms, including physical, emotional, psychological, or financial harm. It can result from criminal activities such as assault, theft, or fraud, where a person becomes a target and suffers negative consequences as a result. Victimization can also occur in the form of bullying, discrimination, harassment, or any other form of mistreatment.

While victimization focuses on the harm suffered by individuals or groups, discrimination emphasizes the unfair treatment or prejudice based on specific characteristics or attributes. Discrimination can lead to victimization if the unfair treatment results in harm or mistreatment of individuals or groups. However, victimization can occur even without discrimination, as it encompasses a broader range of harmful actions that may not necessarily be based on prejudice or bias.