

Standardized Brief of Memorial University's Human Rights Policy

Background

In response to the review by Donna L. Ball and Sheila M. Devine on October 16, 2019, Vice Provost Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism (VPEDI-AR) embarked on establishing a comprehensive Human Rights Policy in April 2023. The process involved collaboration among nine university offices and portfolios to ensure a thorough, nuanced and inclusive approach.

A detailed policy scan was conducted to evaluate existing frameworks within the university, focusing on areas such as human rights, equity, harassment, sexual assault, and accessibility. This was followed by the formation of the Human Rights Policy Working Group under the leadership of the Vice Provost EDI AR, Comprising Legal Counsel, Sexual Harassment and Assault Advisor, the Vice President (Indigenous), Human Resources, Faculty Relations, Occupational Health, the Blundon Centre, and the Policy Office, this group leveraged diverse expertise to draft a policy that aligns with North America's best practices and addresses the unique needs of the university's global community.

The Human Rights Policy aims to uphold Memorial University's commitment to an equitable community by addressing critical needs for robust and agile human rights practices, ensuring all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of their background. The policy enforces the university's dedication to addressing and preventing discrimination on all prohibited grounds as mandated by the NL [Human Rights Act 2010](#), [Accessibility Act 2021](#), the [Employment Equity Act 1995](#), [United Nations Declaration of Indigenous People's Act](#) and the [Labour Standards Act 1990](#)

Principles

The Human Rights Policy is not merely a regulatory framework but a declaration of Memorial's core values and an essential step toward fostering a respectful and demonstrated inclusive academic environment. The Policy is developed under the key guiding principles which are:

1. Recognition of Diverse Impacts: The policy acknowledges the unique effects of discrimination shaped by an individual's social identities, vulnerabilities, and positions within the organizational hierarchy.
2. Comprehensive Commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti Racism: The policy demonstrates its commitment to ensuring all University Community members—including those who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, racialized, people of colour, gender diverse, part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, persons with (dis)abilities, and individuals from various nationalities, cultural, religious and spiritual and ethnic backgrounds—enjoy equitable access to opportunities. This extends beyond mere access, striving to remove any form of discrimination including but not limited to racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, or gender-based discrimination that could impede full participation. The commitment encompasses all areas of university life including accommodations, academic programs, employment, community and public engagement, and recreational activities. The policy is dedicated to aligning the University's efforts with provincial human rights standards to promote an inclusive, as safe as possible, and supportive environment for all.

3. Addressing Power Differentials: Focuses on mitigating power imbalances that affect community members based on personal and social characteristics, promoting equitable treatment and opportunities.
4. Clear Complaint Processes: Specifies procedures for handling complaints, in an accessible manner, avoiding duplications, and ensuring processes are transparent and accountable.
5. Educational and Training Initiatives: Commits to ongoing education and training to enhance understanding and application of human rights principles among all community members.
6. Trauma-Informed Approach: Adopts and implements an approach to handling issues, and concerns while recognizing the potential trauma histories of individuals involved in discrimination cases.
7. Integrated the Bona Fide Occupational element in the policy to provide clarity on when certain discriminatory practices might be legally permissible if they are necessary for the job.

Responsibilities:

- i. **Overall authority to administer and enforcement of decisions:**
 - Provost and Vice President (Academic) or delegate: Decision maker and authority to implement the decisions at St. Johns, Signal Hill, Harlow and Labrador Campuses.
 - Vice-President or delegate For the Grenfell Campus
 - Vice-President (Academic and Student Affairs and Services) or delegate For the Marine Institute
- ii. **Operational Administrator and Lead**
 - Vice Provost EDI-AR: Operational Administrator and lead of Human Rights Policy.
- iii. **Focal Person for registering Complaints and Concerns:**
 - Human Rights Advisor: Serves as a resource for policy guidance and focal person of complaints and concerns, ensuring all community members receive support and fair treatment through the University Wide Human Rights Complaints and Concerns procedures (drafted and being fine-tuned).