

Equity & Human Rights Services' statement about Human Rights and the COVID-19 crisis

To the Western community:

During the COVID-19 crisis, the office of Equity & Human Rights Services (EHRS) remains available and committed to ensuring Western continues to be a safe, respectful and inclusive community.

Being mindful of the values of equity, diversity and inclusion is important during this time. We must be sure to balance concerns about health and safety with human rights. EHRS encourages you to consider the following:

The COVID-19 crisis is a global pandemic. It is not restricted to people of a particular nationality, ethnic origin, place of origin, or race. Statements or actions that target individuals because of their race, ethnicity, nationality or country of origin are inappropriate and disrespectful. As a community we must all support each other. Some of our colleagues, classmates and friends are not able to return to their homes at this time due to travel restrictions or other concerns. Be kind. Be aware of stigma, stereotyping and bias. Be careful with your words and actions. Be a friend and an ally. If you hear racial or xenophobic comments, speak up. If you have questions or need support, please reach out to Equity & Human Rights Services (equity@uwo.ca)

While many of us are working and learning at home, home is not always a safe place for all. Concerns about violence in the home may be affecting members of our community. Please check-in with your friends and colleagues. Listen carefully to any expressed concerns. Offer support, understanding and resources, when you can. Local (London and area) supports may be found on [the Anova website](#). Western students needing support may also contact the Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager at support@uwo.ca.

Working and learning from home may also be difficult due to resources and individual family/household needs. Some students and employees will now be balancing family care responsibilities at home. Some may be experiencing economic challenges due to a loss of an income. The stress of this pandemic, compounded by other responsibilities, events and concerns, is creating very real challenges to physical and mental health. Please be flexible, kind and offer compassion. This is an unprecedented time and we are all trying to adapt and cope to the best of our abilities. Western Human Resources has created webpage called, [Employee Resources - COVID-19](#). Staff and faculty can also access [the Employee and Family Assistance Program](#). Students may contact the Student Support and Case Management team at sscm@uwo.ca.

The virtual learning environment is new for many students and instructors. However, the need to be mindful of accessibility and the duty to accommodate continues, even

in a virtual space. Creating inclusive learning environments is vital to ensuring each student's learning and success. Due to the challenges of this time, students may find themselves needing accommodations for health reasons, family responsibilities or other reasons. We encourage you to try to be as flexible as possible. Western's Centre for Teaching and Learning has created [many tools to assist you in designing for accessibility in online learning](#). Equity & Human Rights Services is also a resource for duty to accommodate/human rights based questions.

Equity & Human Rights Services encourages you to consider human rights and accessibility during this pandemic. Equity and diversity are vitally important at this time. Only by being respectful and inclusive can we ensure that we create a sense of community, compassion and belonging, even while we are apart and away from campus. If you need our office's support, we are here for you.

Additional Resources:

[Ontario Human Rights Commission's policy statement on the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[Harvard Business Review – How to be an Inclusive Leader through a Crisis](#)

[Fostering a Sense of Belonging in Times of Crisis and Challenge: An Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\) Handbook for Individuals and Organizations During COVID-19](#) (a special thank you to our colleagues at the University of Guelph's Office of Diversity and Human Rights for allowing us to share this tool and resources).