Embedding EDI-DIA Into Our Academic Programs: Examples, Guiding Questions, and Supports

Our Commitment

Members of the Western University community share a collective responsibility to respond to and further the needs and interests of equity deserving groups, confront racism and all other forms of discrimination and oppression, and build a more accessible campus and inclusive culture for students, faculty, staff, and graduates. We have specific responsibilities, too, toward the work of decolonization and Indigenization, with respect to Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and to accessibility through the Access for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Postsecondary institutions in Canada are called upon to consider how we may action these commitments at all levels of our community. At the institutional level, Western University affirms our commitment through the Towards Western at 150 strategic plan, the Indigenous Strategic Plan (2016), the work of Western's EDID Central Working Group, and as a signatory of the Scarborough Charter.

Everyone in the Western community has a role to play, especially those leading enhancements and innovations in academic programs. This short resource aims to outline common examples of how academic programs can embed the principles of EDI-DIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion – Decolonization, Indigenization & Accessibility) into their design, learning outcomes, procedures, and operations. Program review serves as one strategic opportunity to bolster equitable, inclusive, and accessible policy and practice, to decolonize curriculum and pedagogy, and to integrate Indigenous perspectives, scholarship, and ways of knowing into our programs. While this resource addresses these principles together, we must also be mindful of collapsing all of these efforts into one approach –while they overlap, each responsibility is distinct in their historical, political, and social contexts.

Spectrum of Change

Referencing scholarship by Dr. Candace Brunette-Debassige and colleagues (Brunette-Debassige et al., 2022; Stein, 2019; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Andreotti et al., 2015), we borrow the notion that actions to decolonize, Indigenize, better integrate EDI into programs, and make them more accessible can be visualized along a spectrum of work, as demonstrated below. Minor reforms focus on the changes individuals can make, such as within courses, while major reforms are changes made by programs and departments. At the furthest end of the spectrum, teaching, learning, and research are designed in partnership with equity-deserving communities.

As we are all responsible for EDI work, so too is it necessary to ensure Western community members enact individual, program, and community-based reforms. The goal of this resource is to support programs in moving further along the spectrum, ensuring

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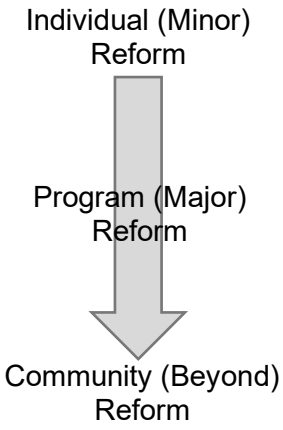
minor reforms connect with one another and support Western's broader goals of building an inclusive culture.



- Integration of EDI-DIA into course content
- Flexible course assignments or graduate research requirements
- Incorporation of Universal Design for Learning principles
- Diversified faculty and staff complement
- Decolonized program learning outcomes
- EDI-focused program policies
- Culturally relevant campus and digital spaces
- Holistic student supports
  Indigenous autonomy and leadership
- Reciprocal relationships with local communities

Identifying EDI-DIA Priorities for Your Program

Use the five steps below to find your program's current place on the spectrum of change and help identify your EDI-DIA next steps. Consider using the provided reflection questions to guide discussion during your EDI-focused meetings or retreats.

Step 1: Grounding

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are broad values used in higher education to describe justice work (see definitions from the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and from the Office of EDI). How programs demonstrate their commitment to these values is through specific, concrete actions such as ensuring courses and campus spaces are accessible or designing curriculum and pedagogies that integrate Indigenous and western ways of knowing. Engaging in EDI-DIA is challenging because this acronym conflates so many complex areas under one umbrella.

Questions to guide your thinking:

1. What do the terms equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, decolonization, and Indigenization mean to members of your program? How are these terms related? Who does this work benefit?
2. Why are you undertaking this work as a program?
3. What are the risks to the people involved with this work? What measures will you put in place to prevent harm to equity-deserving members of your program, should they participate in this work?

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Resources to support this step:

- Work through definitions of Reconciliation, Decolonization, and Indigenization and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as a program (also see definitions in: *Igniting Change: Full Report*)
- Explore the EDI-D focused training modules or Tool for Inclusive and Equitable Initiative Planning available through the Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- Explore the Indigenous Teaching and Learning Modules available on the CTL Website

Step 2: Gathering Data

Given the imperative and importance of EDI-DIA, it is likely that a range of work is happening in your program. Some members will have engaged in minor examples of reform, such as attending professional development or revising their course, while others might be thinking about policy revision or ways to collaborate with local Indigenous communities and equity-deserving groups.

Consider collecting the following information from members of your program:

1. What EDI-DIA learning have you engaged in so far? What work have you been involved with or completed?
2. What EDI-DIA goals do members have for your program? What EDI-DIA priorities are most urgent to each member of your group?
3. What Calls to Action or Justice are applicable to your program? How do you respond to them?
4. Did any lived experiences, resources, or other evidence help group members answer question 2? For example, is there any essential reading members would recommend?
    - Consider collecting them here, as you will need them in Step 4.

Resources available to support this step:

- Collect responses using a shared Microsoft Word document or Qualtrics form
- Use Table 1 (below) for examples at of EDI-DIA work across the entire spectrum of change

Step 3: Placing Your Program on the Spectrum of Change

Summarize or aggregate your group's Step 2 results. Expect your program to have completed some elements of EDI-DIA work more than others, and for some members to be further along in their unlearning journeys. When discussing both completed work and priorities, reassure members that all types of work are necessary – exploring the resources shared in this document may be a priority for your group.

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Questions to guide your thinking:

1. Use the results of Step 2, Question 1 to summarize where EDI-DIA work is happening in your program, overall.
    - Where has EDI-DIA work not yet started?
2. Place your program on the spectrum of change using Table 1, below.
3. Can you summarize members' EDI-DIA priorities into shared themes?

Resources available to support this step:

- Use Table 1 (below) or the "Path from Exclusive Club to Inclusive Organization" to support your analysis.
- The "Building a Strong Fire" framework may help to identify priority themes

Step 4: Deep Listening

While our campus is rapidly changing, the majority of Western faculty and staff are white, cis-hetero, and able-bodied settlers (Equity Census, 2022). This means that before you set EDI-DIA goals for your program, you will want to reflect on how your Step 3 priorities align with those of marginalized communities.

This step is where EDI-DIA work can be unfairly left to equity-deserving members of your program. Rather than asking for customized workshops or professional development for your program, consider exploring existing resources created by Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour. Many examples are listed in the right-hand column of Table 1.

Questions to guide your thinking:

1. How do your program priorities from Step 3, Question 2 support the priorities and needs of equity-deserving groups?
2. What learning is your program willing to do to better understand any misalignments?
3. Consider having group members share resources or ideas that helped change their thinking. Alternatively, your group could all read the same resource(s) and discuss together.

Resources available to support this step:

- Western University's Indigenous Strategic Plan (October 2016)
- President's Anti-Racism Working Group Final Report (May 2020)
- Western Equity Census Report (March 2022)
- Book a consultation with Western Libraries for help with finding diverse voices, such as equity-deserving members of your disciplinary community

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Step 5: Setting Goals

Reflecting on the results of the previous four steps, identify equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, Indigenization, and/or accessibility goals or next steps for your program. A reminder that EDI-DIA work is complex: your incremental efforts today pave way for major reform tomorrow. Starting small and concentrating on work you can do right now is better than setting goals you do not know how to achieve and might abandon.

Questions to guide your thinking:

1. What EDI-DIA work can your program begin right now? Use the Applying an EDI Lens Tool or Building a Strong Fire framework to guide your thinking.
2. Which priorities will best help your program move down the Spectrum of Change?
3. How will you ensure everyone (and not just equity-deserving individuals) is involved in sharing the responsibilities for achieving your goals? The far-right column of Table 1 includes campus resources and programming designed to support your program with its ongoing EDI-DIA work.

Resources available to support this step:

- The Building a Strong Fire Framework:
  Grounded in Indigenous knowledges and educational priorities, Building a Strong Fire integrates Ontario's approach to postsecondary quality assurance with participatory approaches underpinning Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. This integration results in a philosophy of program review that aims to ensure intentional action so that design and operations remain interconnected and in balance. Akin to the logs in a fire that are well-tended to grow and burn strong, the framework's four interconnected Indigenous Quality Assurance Standards help institutional community members meet expectations in culturally responsive, responsible and respectful ways. These are: 1) Celebration and Sharing; 2) Honour and Respect; 3) Place and Purpose; 4) Relationship to Land.

  Specific examples of the actioning of each standard, via 'four directions' of awareness – from the east ("seeing it") to the south ("relating to it") to the west ("figuring it out and understanding") to the north ("doing it or taking action") are presented in rubric in the "Building a Strong Fire" document between pages 20 and 33.
- The Applying an EDI Lens Tool is designed to support programs with identifying priorities or next steps

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Examples of EDI-DIA Work Across the Spectrum of Change

Minor Reforms

	Decolonization	Indigenization	Accessibility	Anti-Racism	Campus Resources to Support Your Program
Individual professional development	Faculty and staff develop relational positionality statements that acknowledge their privileges as well as their relationships to Indigenous knowledges, lands, and Peoples Program members attend institutional professional development opportunities, contribute to EDI-DIA-focused committees				OII Indigenous Allyship Guide (forthcoming) Anti-Racism Foundations Certificate Program (online modules from Office of EDI) Inclusive Language Guide
Course curriculum	Course learning outcomes include multiple epistemologies and were designed in partnership with students	Encouraging non-Indigenous faculty to include Indigenous content in course outcomes	Universal Design for Learning principles (UDL) are applied to curriculum design, development and delivery	Include course learning outcomes related to intercultural, global, or cosmopolitan learning	Maatookiiying gaa-miinigoowiziying (Sharing Our Gifts) Indigenous learning bundles Indigenous Teaching and Learning Series
Course pedagogy	Use decolonial pedagogies to enable students to critically interrogate their discipline's contributions to colonization	Indigenous ways of knowing and voices included in course readings, speakers, and learning resources	Course assessments include flexible assignments in consideration of Universal Design for Learning	Design courses and assignments in partnership with students	Intercultural Teaching Competence Framework "Developing an Inclusive Teaching Practice" module The Educator's Accessibility Toolkit
Graduate student research		Broadening student thesis committee membership to include Indigenous Elders, as needed	Development of schedules and explicit communication methods	Graduate students implement EDI-D tools in their research to build knowledge with and about equity-deserving groups	Knowledge Exchange and EDI Tool by Western Research EDI Resource Guide by Western Research
Faculty & staff complement		Examination of existing faculty and staff complement and development of targets for future hiring			

Major Reforms

	Decolonization	Indigenization	Accessibility	Anti-Racism	Campus Resources to Support Your Program
Program-wide professional development	Programs interrogate how they continue to uphold colonialism and white supremacy, and/or contribute to epistemic injustices against Indigenous Peoples	Programs learn to embed Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and pedagogies in ethical, respectful and inter-culturally relevant ways	Programs move from an accommodation mindset to a flexibility mindset with respect to program demands on individuals with disabilities, whether they are students, staff, or faculty		Indigenous Teaching and Learning Series Cycle of Decolonization (CTL) (forthcoming) Introduction to Accessible Education from the Council of Ontario Universities
Program admission and progression		Examine patterns of admission, acceptance, enrolment, and retention. Determine needed supports or actions required to address identified barriers (e.g., financial supports, admission requirements, web accessibility, hiring, pathway programs)			Leading through Spiral of Inquiry (book available through Western Libraries)
Program curriculum	All students have foundational knowledge about their discipline's relationship with colonization and Indigenous Peoples in Canada	Students have an understanding of engaging respectfully, reciprocally, and responsibly with Indigenous peoples and communities		Programs embed subject matter authored by equity-deserving group members and relevant to equity-deserving groups	Western Libraries' Knowledge Justice Curriculum
Program pedagogy	Embedding decolonial critical pedagogy into program	Engaging with Indigenous people and communities to create Indigenous-led opportunities for intergenerational and community engaged, experiential, and land-based learning	Course assessments & teaching strategies include flexible assignments and physically accessible course materials	Culturally relevant assessments, and opportunities for intercultural or global learning, available to all students.	Antiracism Plans in Canada Alternative Format support from Western Libraries
Program policy	Make EDI-DIA a standing item on program committee meeting agendas Establish mechanisms for ensuring applicable policies are created, updated, and maintained (e.g., admission, acceptance, accommodation, etc.)				

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Holistic student supports		Intentional communication and bolstering of supports for Indigenous students	Ensure engagement with Accessible Education to arrange optimal accommodations for support of students with disabilities.	Intentional support of equity-deserving student populations	

Beyond Reforms

	Decolonization	**Indigenization**	**Accessibility**	**Anti-Racism**	**Available Campus Resources to Support Your Program** (in addition to those above)
Pedagogy & Curriculum	Collaborate with local Indigenous knowledge holders and educators to deliver Indigenous educational opportunities		Create community-based learning experiences that involve people with disabilities and the organizations that support them	Create community-based learning experiences that involve equity-deserving groups	Building a Strong Fire framework
Research	Reciprocal, community-led research opportunities are supported				
Policy	Non-western research epistemologies recognized in faculty recruitment, hiring, and tenure, and promotion policies and in graduate research Considerations around students' ability to integrate cultural and ceremonial activities with their program learning				

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