PROCEDURE FOR POLICY 1.58 – Affirming Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership at Western University

Governing Policy:	Affirming Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership at Western University
Sections:	Roles and Responsibilities; Affirmation Process; Appeal Process; Intentionally False Declaration; Additional Notes-Affirmation Process for Students; Additional Notes-Recruitment of Indigenous Faculty Members; Data Use & Privacy
Responsible Officer:	Provost & Vice-President (Academic) Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives)
Responsible Office:	Office of the Provost & Vice President (Academic) Office of Indigenous Initiatives
Effective Date:	June 26, 2025
Supersedes:	(new)

I. GENERAL

1. The Office of the Provost & Vice-President (Academic) and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) have primary responsibility for administering the Policy for Affirming Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership at Western University in accordance with the procedures detailed herein.

II. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. It is critical that Indigenous peoples themselves take up leading roles at the University to determine the process to affirm Indigenous citizenship or membership, especially when recruiting for Indigenous-designated roles and initiatives. This is especially important in response to the disconnect of settler-colonial institutions from distinct Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing, being, and doing. As such, Indigenous peoples themselves must inform and lead all Indigenous affirmation processes.

2. The Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives) (VP/AVP II) will:

(a) form an Indigenous Affirmation Advisory Committee (IAAC) on an as needed, *ad hoc* basis in accordance with this Procedure to verify all declarations of Indigenous citizenship or membership that are subject to this Procedure;

(b) participate in the IAAC's processes and Chair the Appeal Board as described in this Procedure; and

(c) provide leadership in relation to the University's implementation and application of this Procedure and associated Policy, including receiving and addressing any questions or concerns regarding the Policy/Procedure or concerns raised regarding declarations of Indigenous citizenship or membership that are subject to the Policy.

3. The IAAC:

(a) will determine and affirm declarations of Indigenous citizenship or membership in accordance with this Procedure and associated Policy;

(b) will be comprised of a Chair and two (2) other local Indigenous community members from any of the local First Nation communities upon which the University is situated (specifically, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida of the Thames First Nations, and Munsee-Delaware Nation).

- The IAAC Chair will be appointed by the VP/AVP II and must be an affirmed Indigenous faculty member, staff, librarian or archivist employee of the University. The two (2) additional IAAC members may also be Indigenous staff and faculty members at the University.

- If the individual is a member of the Inuk Nation, then the third member of the IAAC will be an Inuk Elder/ Knowledge Keeper identified through a state-recognized Inuit organization rather than a local First Nation community member.

- If the individual is a member of the Métis Nation, then the third member of the IAAC will be a local Métis Elder/ Knowledge Keeper identified through a state-recognized Métis organization rather than a local Indigenous community member.

- All members of the IAAC must operate at arm's length to the individual seeking affirmation (*i.e.*, are unrelated and unaffiliated to the individual) to avoid any conflict of interest or perception of a conflict of interest.

(c) in conducting its work, will:

(i) employ intentional mechanisms, as outlined below, to create and maintain safe spaces and create processes to inform all

interactions where individuals engage with the topic of Indigenous citizenship or membership:

(ii) hold all meetings in-person (or virtually in exceptional circumstances as determined by the IAAC Chair);

(iii) provide trigger warnings leading up to any discussion where Indigenous citizenship or membership may be raised in the process of recruiting/ identifying an Indigenous-designated position(s), award, *etc.*;

(iv) share relevant and accessible resources, as listed in Appendix 1, with all individuals seeking affirmation as they may find the discussion around Indigenous citizenship or membership to be triggering;

(v) provide individuals with a list of required documentation for citizenship or membership declarations and instructions for securely sharing all required documents with the IAAC;

(vi) in accordance with Western's applicable policies and legislation, adhere to strong data management practices wherein all personal information must be kept confidential and safeguarded.

4. Where the Policy and this Procedure apply, the University will:

(a) ensure that only individuals whose declarations of Indigenous citizenship or membership have been affirmed according to this Procedure and associated Policy will be eligible to move forward or will be given preference (as applicable) in the selection, admission, hiring, award or other applicable process and/or will be permitted to hold themselves out in the classroom or other learning environment as holding Indigenous citizenship or membership as defined in the Policy in a manner that conveys influence, authority or perspective by virtue of their Indigenous citizenship or membership.

(b) The fact that an individual's self-declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership is not affirmed under the principles and processes set out in this Procedure and associated Policy does not mean that the individual does not genuinely self-identify as Indigenous or that they could not be affirmed as Indigenous under non-University processes.

III. AFFIRMATION PROCESS

1. Consistent with the concept of Indigenous self-determination, this Procedure is initiated once a member or prospective member of the University community who is subject to the Policy makes a declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership that will result in a new or renewed material advantage to them at

Western or is otherwise subject to the Policy. (For declarations that form part of formal processes, see **Appendices 2 and 3**).

2. Upon direction of the University, anyone who makes a declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership that is subject to the Policy will be required to provide the IAAC with the following current documentation for review and have affirmed:

   (a) a statement of relational positionality[1] (up to 4 pages) that includes details of:

      (i) the individual's personal lived experience[2] in relation to their declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership;

      (ii) the individual's personal connections, responsibilities, and interrelationships with their Indigenous Nation, Clan, language, culture, community, land, and other relevant responsibilities including details of the individual's lineal[3] descent; and;

      (iii) where relevant, details about how colonial practices (*e.g.*, the 'Sixties Scoop', Residential Schools) have impacted how the individual is able to claim Indigenous citizenship or membership as a person with lived experience; and

   (b) two documents demonstrating proof of citizenship or membership in the Indigenous Nation who claims the individual.[4] A non-exhaustive list of documents that can be provided is:

      (i) a copy of a federal/ national/ state recognized citizenship card or official documentation belonging to the individual's biological parent or grandparent – together with proof of connections/ lived-experience to the community.

      (ii) letters of reference provided by Indigenous relatives or members of a national/ federal/ state recognized community who are familiar

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[1] Positionality refers to the how differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society" (https://indigenousinitiatives.ctlt.ubc.ca/classroom-climate/positionality-and-intersectionality/).

[2] Lived experience is the "personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people. It may also refer to knowledge of people gained from direct face-to-face interaction rather than through a technological medium" (www.oxfordreference.com).

[3] This term means lineal consanguinity which describes blood relationships where one person is a direct descendant or ascendant of another, meaning they are related in a straight-line family connection like a parent-child or grandfather- grandchild. (https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/lineal_consanguinity#:~:text=Lineal%20consanguinity%20is%20the%20blood,father%2C%20son%2C%20and%20grandson)

[4] Within the affirmation process, it is necessary that the Indigenous community or organization is able to affirm any claims to membership or citizenship. This is important because in many instances of fraud, individuals have claimed membership and citizenship without the community's or organization's awareness.

with the claimant individual's lived experiences and relational positionality;

(iii) letter of reference or documentation provided by a state-recognized Indigenous membership authority (*e.g.,* letter from Band Membership Officer);

(iv) letters of reference from community-recognized Traditional Community leaders (e.g., Clan mothers, Lodge Keepers);

(v) certificate of Indian Status from First Nations who are federally recognized and those listed on the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada website (https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/SearchFN.aspx?lang=eng);

(vi) a copy of Certificate of Indian Status (*i.e.,* status card) of the individual's biological parent or grandparent who also has federally recognized Indian status – together with proof of lineal family connection;

(vii) an affirmation letter from a national/ federal/ state recognized governance entity indicating that the individual is a 'Non-Status' First Nation person;

(viii) Membership proof from a list of federally or state recognized Métis organizations in Canada, specifically:

- Métis Nation-Saskatchewan
- Métis Nation of Alberta
- Métis Nation British Columbia
- Métis Nation of Ontario
- Manitoba Métis Federation;
- Northwest Territory Métis Nation.

(ix) American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian citizenship document from tribes that are state or federally recognized (https://www.bia.gov/service/tribal-leaders-directory);

(x) a Nunavut Trust Certificate card, Inuit roll number, Inuit Beneficiary Card, or any other proof accepted by state-recognized Inuit communities/ organizations;

(xi) written confirmation letter of Indigenous ancestry from the Department of Indigenous Services Canada;

(xii) international or Global Indigenous peoples' (as defined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

(UNDRIP)[5] accepted membership cards and documentation supporting the individual's claimed relational positionality;

(xiii) other membership cards or letters by state-recognized Indigenous communities /organizations;

(xiv) copy of Birth Certificate – together with a copy of the individual's parents' or grandparents' documentation that affirms claims to Indigeneity; or

(xv) Genealogy trees that contain certified information to confirm lineage.

3. Out of respect and in the spirit of reconciliation and relationship building with local Indigenous communities, this Procedure is based on the principles of citizenship and membership recognized by the local Indigenous communities (*i.e.* the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida of the Thames First Nation and Munsee-Delaware Nation). These principles include a requirement for proof of lineal family connection in order to establish citizenship or membership in a First Nation.

4. In hiring and selection processes, only the applicant(s)/candidate(s) who are short-listed or selected for an interview (or prior to making an offer if the candidate is selected directly by a faculty supervisor) will be directed to undergo affirmation.

<u>IAAC can require additional information</u>

5. The IAAC can exercise its discretion to require an individual to provide additional information including, but not limited to, situations in which the original material submitted shows inconsistencies or deficiencies such as:

- declarations based solely on distant Indigenous lineage with no connection to lived experience;
- an individual's lack of connection to their home Indigenous culture or community, including urban Indigenous communities[6];
- lack of meaningful connection to any Indigenous community, including urban Indigenous communities; or

[5] UNDRIP. N.d. *Who are Indigenous peoples:* chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf

[6] This means the candidate has not demonstrated in their Relational Positionality statement the reason for their lack of connection, relationship, or lived experience to their claimed Indigenous culture, community, and Nation.

- possession of a membership from an Indigenous organization and or community that is not recognized by the state (*e.g.,* membership from a disputed or unrecognized Indigenous membership-issuing organization).

When required Identity documentation is not available

6. In the event an individual is unable to produce the required identity documentation due to colonial displacement (*e.g.* enfranchisement, 'Sixties Scoop'), the following is required:

   (a) An affidavit signed and sworn by the individual confirming:

      (i) proof of lineage connection to said community/ family/ persons (*e.g.,* personal narrative with relevant references, dates, details, etc..); and

      (ii) a historical and genealogical account of one's claimed membership to an Indigenous community;

   (b) a minimum of two (2) community reference letters bearing witness to/ affirming the individual's membership in the community who claims them:

      (i) one (1) of the references must be by a member of the community who has demonstratable personal history with the individual; and

      (ii) one (1) of the references will be solicited by the University.

IAAC decision-making and notification of findings

7. The following guidelines provide direction if there is disagreement among the Chair/members of the IAAC in relation to whether an individual's declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership should be affirmed:

   (a) IAAC members will attempt to reach all affirmation decisions by consensus. If consensus is not reached, an Indigenous Elder/ Knowledge Keeper, identified by Western University's Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII), will be engaged to lead a discussion circle to help the group to reach a consensus;

   (b) The IAAC will normally complete the affirmation process within three (3) weeks of receiving the required documentation and will complete the process sooner where feasible.

   (c) Once a decision has been reached – either by consensus or majority vote – to affirm or not affirm an individual's declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership, the Chair of the IAAC will advise the VP/AVP II of the IAAC's decision.

8. The IAAC chair will advise the relevant decision maker (*e.g.,* the Chair or head of the relevant hiring/ selection committee or other relevant decision maker) of whether the declaration is affirmed or not affirmed.

If Indigenous citizenship or membership is successfully affirmed

9. If the IAAC affirms an individual's Indigenous citizenship or membership in accordance with this Procedure, the individual shall be permitted to proceed within the relevant process or will be given preference, as applicable:

   (a) For faculty, librarian and archivist, and clinical faculty hires, to clear candidates to proceed to interview;

   (b) Staff, Graduate Teaching Assistants, and post-doctoral scholar hires, to release the individual's formal application package to the applicable hiring manager or faculty supervisor~~;~~

   (c) For Indigenous-designated awards, admission, service opportunities, initiatives, *etc.*, or where Indigenous individuals are given preference, the individual may move forward for consideration in the relevant process; or

   (d) For faculty members, Graduate Teaching Assistants, staff, librarian, archivists or post-doctoral scholars in non-Indigenous designated roles who hold a position of authority over, teach or supervise students or post-doctoral scholars and declare that they hold Indigenous citizenship or membership in a manner that conveys influence, authority or perspective by virtue of their Indigenous citizenship or membership, they shall be permitted to continue to do so.

If Indigenous citizenship or membership is not successfully affirmed

10. The IAAC chair will advise the individual of the IAAC's determination, will provide information about the appeal process and will inquire if the individual intends to appeal the IAAC's determination.

11. Upon response from the individual and completion of the appeal process if the individual opts to pursue it, the VP/AVP II will inform the Chair or head of the relevant hiring/ selection committee or other relevant decision maker of the outcome of the affirmation and/or appeal process. The VP/AVP II may provide an interim update regarding anticipated timing once notice of an appeal is received and prior to the Appeal Board's decision being available.

12. In the case of a hiring or appointments Committee, the Chair of that Committee shall only advise the Committee members that the individual is not moving forward in the process. This confidentiality principle will be applied by analogy to other processes that are impacted by this Procedure.

13. To further safeguard and develop Western's work to "advance reconciliation with Indigenous communities" as per the mandate of its institutional strategic plan, *Towards Western at 150*, if an individual's declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership that is subject to the Policy is not affirmed under this Procedure and the associated Policy, that individual will not be eligible for any future Indigenous-designated/preferred positions or other Indigenous-designated/preferred programs or opportunities at the University. Any additional consequences will be addressed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the principles set out in this Procedure and the associated Policy.

14. If circumstances should change and an individual becomes able to provide affirming evidence, they may re-engage the IAAC for further review.

IV. APPEAL PROCESS

1. An individual whose declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership was not affirmed by the IAAC on the grounds of not meeting the eligibility criteria under this Procedure and the associated Policy will have five (5) business days to provide written notice of appeal to the VP/AVP II.

2. In instances of an appeal, the VP/ AVP II will convene and Chair an Appeal Board consisting of individuals who were not members of the IAAC that made the determination under appeal.

    (a) Membership of the Appeal Board will consist of the VP/AVP II as Chair plus two (2) additional members who are at 'arm's length' without any conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest with the individual who is appealing. Membership of the Appeal Board may be comprised of Indigenous staff, faculty, and/or Indigenous community members.

    (b) Upon notice of an appeal, the Appeal Board will convene within ten (10) business days of receiving written notice and will review all documentation and hear directly from the individual requesting the appeal. Legal counsel may accompany an appellant, if desired.

    (c) The Appeal process will be comprised of an oral hearing rather than a determination solely based on written submissions.

    (d) The Appeal Board will provide a decision in writing within five (5) business days of the appeal hearing. The VP/AVP II will communicate the decision to the individual making the appeal as soon as feasible. The Appeal Board's decision will be final.

    (e) If the Appeal Board is unable to reach a consensus, the VP/AVP II will make the final determination.

    (f) The processes used for the IAAC will also inform all processes of the Appeal Board.

V. INTENTIONALLY FALSE DECLARATION

1. An individual who the IAAC/University believes may have made an intentionally false declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership may be subject to investigation by the University. The individual will be advised of any interim measures implemented by the University pending completion of the investigation and will be provided with an opportunity to know and respond to the concern(s) raised before any findings are made by the investigator. If the concern is well founded, the University will take appropriate corrective action, which may include:

   (a) termination/ revocation of the individual's appointment/role, opportunity, fellowship, award, bursary, scholarship or relevant Indigenous-designated/preferred initiative;

   (b) disciplinary action (in accordance with the collective agreement, as applicable);

   (c) future ineligibility for any role at Western; and/ or

   (d) other appropriate action under applicable University policy/collective agreements.

VI. ADDITIONAL NOTES - AFFIRMATION PROCESS FOR STUDENTS

1. For clarity, this Procedure and associated Policy also apply to prospective and/or enrolled students at the University when they attempt to access new or renewed material advantage due to their Indigenous citizenship or membership including roles, opportunities, fellowships, awards, bursaries, scholarships and/or initiatives that have been explicitly designated for Indigenous students or where Indigenous students are given preference.

2. Prior to implementation of this Procedure, student declarations of Indigenous citizenship or membership were affirmed by either the Manager of Indigenous Admissions, and/or the Financial Aid Coordinator in the University's Indigenous Student Centre (ISC) in instances where individuals were leveraging Indigenous access and financial initiatives. The affirmation process included a review of proof of Indigenous citizenship or membership as outlined above. The ISC maintains a secure and confidential list of students whose declarations of Indigenous citizenship or membership have already been affirmed.

3. As of June 26, 2025, all applications for Indigenous-designated student roles, awards, bursaries, scholarships and/or opportunities, *etc.* will be subject to the affirmation criteria and process outlined in this Procedure, which will be applied by a team of designated ISC staff, with support from the IAAC, as needed.

4. A student or prospective student may appeal the ISC's decision to the IAAC which will apply the principles and processes described in this Procedure when hearing and determining the appeal. The IAAC's appeal decision will be final.

VII. ADDITIONAL NOTES - RECRUITMENT OF INDIGENOUS FACULTY MEMBERS

1. After the IAAC process to affirm Indigenous citizenship or membership is successfully completed, the University will proceed with the regular interview of an Indigenous candidate.

2. If an Appointments and/or Search Committee desires additional support, for example in the interpretation of Indigenous approaches to research or the construction of a culturally welcoming interview process, the Committee may seek expertise beyond the normal Committee composition by, for example, inviting an Indigenous Western graduate student and/or an Indigenous community member to join the Committee. Any such invitation outside the provisions of the Faculty Collective Agreement would require agreement from the University's Office of Faculty Relations and the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (UWOFA).

VIII. DATA USE & PRIVACY

1. The University will safeguard all confidential information provided and will comply with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

2. The VP/AVP II will oversee the storage and destruction of all confidential information pertaining to relational positionality statements and supporting documentation used to affirm the Indigenous citizenship or membership of all individuals, *as per* the recommendations from Western's Privacy Officer. Furthermore:

   (a) all documents submitted to demonstrate Indigenous citizenship or membership will be stored within Western's secure cloud-based platforms for three (3) years beyond when those individuals are no longer employed or associated with the University (or applied to the University, as applicable);

   (b) only the VP/AVP II, the IAAC Chair, and the Manager of Indigenous Admissions and Enrollment will have access to archived documents used to affirm Indigenous citizenship or membership, such as positionality statements and documentation, except disclosure required or permitted by law.

Last Reviewed: June 2025

Appendix 1: Resources

- The First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1-855-242-3310 or https://www.hopeforwellness.ca
- 24/7 Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419
- 24/7 Indian Residential School Survivors Society Crisis Support: 1-800-721-0066
- CMHA Virtual After-Hours Crisis Counselling for students: studentcrisisappointment@cmhamiddlesex.ca
- Good2Talk Post-secondary Student Helpline: 1-866-925-5454
- Western University Employee (and family) Assistance Program-LifeWorks: 1-844-880-9142
- Western University – Student Crisis Counselling: 519-661-3030

Appendix 2: Declaration of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership

I understand that the initiative for which I am being considered is intended specifically for an Indigenous individual, or I have applied to an open role or initiative and have declared or claimed Indigenous citizenship or membership in order to be given preference. As such, I solemnly declare that I hold Indigenous citizenship or membership as demonstrated by the submission of the following:

1. My detailed statement of relational positionality, which includes a demonstration of lived experience and includes details about my lineal descent as per guidance provided in the University's Procedure for Policy 1.58 - *Affirming Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership;* and

2. My proof of citizenship or membership to the Indigenous Nation claiming me, as per the Procedure for Policy 1.58 - *Affirming Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership.*

I understand that for Indigenous-designated positions or initiatives and those where Indigenous citizenship or membership is preferred, should my claim of Indigenous citizenship or membership not be affirmed, and not successfully appealed, my application will be rejected and my candidacy terminated.

I further understand that providing false or misleading information about Indigenous citizenship or membership may result in an investigation led by Western University and, if the concerns are well founded, corrective action may be taken, including the termination/revocation of any appointment/role, opportunity, fellowship, bursary, scholarship, award or relevant Indigenous-designated/preferred initiative and/or that I may be subject to disciplinary or other proceedings under applicable University policy/collective agreement.

I understand that if I make an intentionally false declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership, I will not be eligible to apply for any future roles (*i.e.,* any non-Indigenous designated role) at Western University

_____ _____

Signature of Applicant **Date**

_____ _____

Witness **Date**

Appendix 3: Student Declaration of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership

I understand that the role, opportunity, fellowship, award, bursary, scholarship, and or initiative for which I am being considered is intended specifically for an Indigenous student at Western University or Indigenous students will be given preference. As such, I solemnly declare that I hold Indigenous citizenship or membership as demonstrated by the submission of the following:

1. A student's detailed statement of relational positionality, which includes a demonstration of lived experience and includes details about their lineal descent, as per guidance provided in the University's Procedure for Policy 1.58 - *Affirming Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership;* and

2. A student's proof of membership to the Indigenous Nation claiming them as per the Procedure for Policy 1.58 - *Affirming Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship or Membership.*

I understand that should my claim of Indigenous citizenship or membership not be affirmed under this Procedure and associated Policy and not successfully appealed, my application will be rejected and my candidacy terminated.

I further understand that providing false or misleading information about Indigenous citizenship or membership may result in an investigation led by Western University and, if the concerns are well founded, corrective action may be taken, including the termination/revocation of my role, opportunity, fellowship, award, and or relevant initiative that has been designated explicitly for an Indigenous student (or for which preference is given), and/or that I may be subject to proceedings under applicable University policy, including *Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students*, the policy on *Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students* or the *Code of Student Conduct*, as applicable.

I understand that if I make an intentionally false declaration of Indigenous citizenship or membership, I will not be eligible to apply for any future or subsequent roles (i.e., any non-Indigenous designated role) at Western University.

_____ _____

Signature of Student **Date**

_____ _____

Witness **Date**