



# WHAT IS EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

## **Human Rights & Equity Services**

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**[DAL.CA/DALRESPECT](https://dal.ca/dalrespect)**

## **What is Employment Equity?**

Employment Equity is a program implemented to ensure that all job applicants and employees have a fair chance in the workplace. It is achieved when no person is denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to their abilities.

## **What is Affirmative Action?**

Affirmative Action is a process by which equality in the workplace is achieved through the active elimination of systemic discrimination. Affirmative Action measures are pro-active, temporary measures designed to remedy the effects of discrimination against members of the designated groups, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, racially visible people, and women. Affirmative Action through an Employment Equity program strives to “level the playing field” for all employees.

## **What is systemic discrimination?**

Systemic discrimination occurs when groups of people are excluded from the workplace for reasons not related to job requirements. It results from entrenched policies or practices that are part of the normal operation of employment systems which unintentionally discriminate. Often hidden, systemic discrimination has an adverse affect on Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, racially visible people, and women.

## **Example of systemic discrimination:**

Managers assume that because the workplace is a university, the best candidates for clerical positions are those with a university degree.

This statement constitutes systemic discrimination because the job requirements for clerical work can usually be met very well without a university degree. The degree requirement may exclude many qualified people, particularly members of the designated groups.

## **What is Dalhousie's Policy on Employment Equity and Affirmative Action?**

Dalhousie University's policy statement on Employment Equity through Affirmative Action was approved by the Board of Governors in October of 1989. The Policy was approved by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission on April 26, 1991.

The Policy defines Dalhousie's Employment Equity commitment and implementation criteria for extending affirmative treatment to the four designated groups recognized by the government. Aboriginal Peoples (especially Mi'kmaq), Persons with a Disability, Racially Visible People (especially people of Black African descent or indigenous to Nova Scotia), and Women. Copies of the Policy are available from Human Rights & Equity Services.

## **Why does Dalhousie have an Employment Equity Policy?**

Dalhousie University began exploring Employment Equity issues in 1981 and 1984; an Affirmative Action program directed to the appointment of female academics was introduced. In 1986, the federal government passed the Employment Equity Act and established the Federal Contractors Program (FCP) in 1989.

The program requires that in order to receive government contracts and/or grants over \$200,000, organizations with 100 or more employees must commit themselves to the implementation of Employment Equity. Most universities in Canada are members of this program.

As a member of the Federal Contractors Program, Dalhousie is required to submit bi-annual reports demonstrating our progress in increasing the representation and distribution of members of the four designated groups on campus. We are also required to describe any initiatives taken to improve the climate for members of the designated groups.

## **What is the role of Human Rights & Equity Office?**

Created in August 1990, Human Rights & Equity Services is mandated to review employment systems for signs of systemic discrimination and to assist all faculties and administrative units in the planning and implementation of Employment Equity programs. Human Rights & Equity Services also receives and provides advice on complaints of discrimination directed towards members of the designated groups. Human Rights & Equity Advisor and staff are available for consultation, assistance in the development of training programs, and advice on all matters related to equity in the workplace.

## What is the Council on Employment Equity through Affirmative Action?

The Council on Employment Equity through Affirmative Action is a committee representing the Dalhousie Community. The Council works through and with the Human Rights & Equity Advisor to implement Dalhousie's Policy on Employment Equity and Affirmative Action. The Council is comprised of representatives from each employee group and bargaining unit, members of each of the four designated groups, one student, three Vice-Presidents, the Director of Human Resources, and the Human Rights & Equity Advisor.

Should you require this information in an alternate format, please contact Human Rights & Equity Services.

Human Rights & Equity Services is physically accessible to all.

All inquiries are held in confidence.



### Human Rights & Equity Services

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