

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH: WHAT THEY ARE AND WHY THEY ARE NEEDED

MAIN CONCEPTS

DIVERSITY

Diversity refers to a group of individuals who **differ in their identity**; geographic, cultural or religious origin; age, sex, gender or sexual orientation; academic discipline; or other characteristics.

DESIGNATED GROUPS

Designated groups are groups of people who are marginalized and face persistent barriers to employment. In Canada, the *Employment Equity Act* identifies four designated groups:

- **Women:** Any person who identifies as a woman;
- **Aboriginal peoples:** An Aboriginal person is a North American Indian or a member of a First Nation, Métis or Inuit. North American Indians or members of a First Nation include treaty, status or registered Indians, as well as non-status and non-registered Indians;
- **Persons with disabilities:** A person with a disability is a person who has a long term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment;
- **Members of visible minorities:** In Canada, a member of a visible minority is someone (other than an Aboriginal person as defined above) who is non-white in colour/race, regardless of place of birth. In Quebec, the *Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* specifies that there are also ethnic minorities that are people whose mother tongue is neither French nor English.



DID YOU KNOW ...

... that “designated groups” is a **collective concept**? It refers to the challenges experienced by a group collectively.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the many disadvantages historically experienced by people who belong to more than one designated group, for example, women who are also members of visible minorities.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

An unconscious bias is an implicit attitude, stereotype, motivation or assumption that can occur without one’s knowledge, control or intention. Unconscious bias is a result of our life experiences and affects all types of people. Unconscious bias can lead to direct, indirect or systemic discrimination. Members of designated groups are often victims of unconscious bias.

SOME DEFINITIONS ...

INCLUSION

Inclusion means taking steps to establish an **environment in which diversity is respected** and all members of the community are fully integrated and supported in ways that promote their well being and achievement. Here are some examples:

- Installing wheelchair ramps;
- **Non-gendered designation of washrooms**, so that they are accessible to everyone, regardless of what gender they do or do not identify with;
- Implementing strategies to support the **recruitment and career advancement** of members of designated groups;
- Establishing **flexible work schedules** to help parents and family caregivers;
- Adjusting schedules for evening and week-end **social and training activities** so that parents and family caregivers can participate;
- Adopting an **inclusive teaching approach** by giving students with special challenges more time to finish exams;
- Installing refrigerators in work and study areas so that nursing mothers can store their milk;
- Providing spaces for prayer.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EQUALITY AND EQUITY?

EQUALITY

Equality means that everyone has access to the same opportunities. But the path to accessing these opportunities is not the same for everyone. For example, members of designated groups collectively face more systemic barriers.



EQUITY

Equity is an approach to correcting historic disadvantages between groups. Equity can also be described as an approach designed to treat all individuals fairly by taking their particular situations into account and eliminating any systemic barriers.

**EQUALITY
AND EQUITY
ARE NOT THE
SAME THING**

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ABOUT THE NSERC CHAIR FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING (QUEBEC)

The overall goal of the NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Quebec) is to increase women's participation in science and engineering in Quebec. To achieve this goal, the Chair has divided its program into two components: an **activities** component and a **research** component.

The general objective of the **activities** component is to break down the often unconscious and unintentional barriers that girls and women face at various times in their lives and that limit their access to enjoyable careers in science and engineering.

The general objective of the **research** component is to analyze the current status of women in science and engineering in Quebec, and then evaluate potential solutions to help them to advance in these fields.

In the activities and research that it plans to carry out during its first term, the NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Quebec) will pursue the following specific objectives:

1. **Demystify** science and engineering;
2. **Raise awareness** of the impact that careers in science and engineering have on society;
3. **Present women** currently working in science and engineering as role models, to counter stereotypes;
4. **Provide tools to support** women who have chosen careers in science and engineering, and sensitize the settings in which they work;
5. **Support** science and technology teachers in primary and secondary schools;
6. **Understand and report on the status** of women in science and engineering in Quebec;
7. **Develop strategies** for recruiting and retaining female science and engineering students and professors in Quebec.

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