

Equity Compass feedback

The Equity Compass survey was open to the SFU community from March 14 to April 7, 2023. During that time, there were 100 responses to the survey with a 69% completion rate. Respondents self-identified as 21% students, 35% staff, 30% faculty, 14% other. Of the responses, **34%** (13/38) indicated that they felt that the Equity Compass was aligned with the needs and priorities of the SFU community, **42%** (16/38) were neutral, indicating they saw promise in the Equity Compass but had some concerns, and **23%** (9/38) indicated that they felt that the Equity Compass was not aligned with the needs and priorities of SFU community. While the Equity Compass online survey was open for feedback, the Equity Office also received two letters, one with 21 faculty signatories (Letter 1) and another with three signatories writing on behalf of a group of 2S/LGBTQIA+ faculty, staff and students (Letter 2). We also received two individual emails that provided feedback on the draft Equity Compass document also in support of adding a focused action for 2S/LGBTQIA+ equity and inclusion.

The overall feedback reinforced some of the themes heard during the Equity Compass consultation from October to December 2022. Feedback included:

1. Positive sentiments that the Equity Compass takes an institution-wide approach, addresses Indigeneity and anti-racism and that the goals are representative of the core needs of the community.
2. Comments, and concerns related to anticipated barriers related to:
 - a. The interaction between academic freedom and equity, diversity and inclusion, which often presents as opposition to equity initiatives in post-secondary and how to have constructive discussions about these issues.
 - b. The operationalization in a context of budget and resource barriers and constraints and equity work often being de-prioritized.
 - c. The balance of the centralized and decentralized approach to the Equity Compass and how to ensure that people called upon to support initiatives are compensated.
3. Requests for providing further clarity for equity-related language, definitions and/or glossaries and equity, diversity and inclusion resources.
4. A clear call for more focus on 2S/LGBTQIA+ equity and inclusion.
5. A clear call from those who self-identified from marginalized communities for ongoing transparency, communication, accountability and institutional support for the Equity Compass to ensure concrete action, change and care and compassion for all.

Following a review of the feedback, the following substantive edits to the document were made:

- Addition of an action specific to supports for 2S/LGBTQIA+ community members,
- Additional paragraph to provide information on UNDRIP and BC and Canada’s commitments to Reconciliation, and our responsibility and acknowledgement of the unique positioning of Indigenous Peoples.

In addition, various editorial and language clarification edits have been made throughout the document.

A summary of requested edits from feedback received and the response to each is provided below. Please note that the below refers to actions taken or not taken to finalize the Equity Compass document only. All feedback relevant to ongoing operationalization of the Equity Compass will continue to be taken into consideration as appropriate as noted in the actions/notes column.

Feedback	From whom	Theme	Impact for Equity Compass document	Actions /Notes
1. Correction on use of Indigenous terminology.	Indigenous community members	Terminology	Content updated	Reviewed and updated language to Indigenous Peoples where appropriate.
2. Improve reference to UNDRIP.	Indigenous community members	Truth and Reconciliation	Content updated	Added clarification on UNDRIP, subsequent national and provincial laws, and Section 35 of Canada’s constitution that recognizes and affirms the inherent rights and treaty rights of Aboriginal peoples.
3. Concern that Equity Compass goals are limited to those from ethnic backgrounds.	Survey	Scope of work	Content updated	Edit to Goal 4, Objective 2 to clarify this is intended to include all equity-deserving groups.

4. Concern that the definition of diversity did not include intersectionality.	Survey	Terminology	Content updated	Identity dimensions are listed in the definition, however for clarity, intersectionality was added to the first sentence.
5. The principle of restorative and transformative was unclear.	Letter 1/Survey	Terminology	Content updated	Principle rewritten with plainer language.
6. Ask to include 'political opinion' in the definition of diversity and include perspective differences.	Letter 1	Terminology	Content updated	The definition of diversity included language for differences in perspective. However, upon further review, political belief has been explicitly added as it is included in the British Columbia Human Rights Code.
7. Request to ensure systems are changed in the interest of transgender equity and safety	Letter 2/Survey	Scope of work	Content updated	Action added to Goal 1 to advance 2S/LGBTQIA+ equity and inclusion structural gaps.
8. Inclusion of gender affirming benefits	Letter 2/Survey	Scope of work	Content updated	This initiative is already in progress, and an action item has been added to the Equity Compass to ensure 2S/LGBTQIA+ initiatives continue to be supported.

<p>9. Operationalization concerns regarding the interaction between academic freedom and equity especially in situations in which they come into conflict.</p>	<p>Letter 1/Survey</p>	<p>Operationalization</p>	<p>No content updates</p>	<p>A core value of the Equity Compass and the university is Academic Freedom and Critical Thinking which is fully acknowledged as the context for the implementation of the equity strategic focus areas. It is also stated within the Equity Compass: “The Compass also needs to be operationalized in the context of all SFU Collective Agreements and will be responsive to any new legal and institutional frameworks that emerge during the implementation period.” The Faculty Association Collective Agreement directly addresses academic freedom (Article 12) so it is not further addressed in the Equity Compass.</p>
<p>10. Meaning of equity data benchmarks is unclear and specifically a question about whether there is an intent to establish departmental quotas</p>	<p>Letter 1/Survey</p>	<p>Operationalization</p>	<p>No content updates</p>	<p>The Equity Compass does not direct academic or administrative units to impose quotas. However, the Equity Office will provide support to all who wish to set diversity targets to close employment equity gaps, within employment equity and legal frameworks that support preferential hiring.</p>

<p>11. Concern that the document is self-contradictory in some places. For example: advocating for discriminatory hiring practices and concerns that employment equity is reverse discrimination.</p>	<p>Letter 1/Survey</p>	<p>Operationalization</p>	<p>No content updates</p>	<p>All references to preferential/limited/targeted hiring processes are supported by legal frameworks. The processes SFU is undertaking are upheld by Federal Employment Equity, BC Human Rights Act and our equity commitments as outlined by Universities Canada’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion principles. Preferential hiring practices are not contradictory to the definition of equity, which includes identifying and redressing systemic barriers including barriers to employment access and opportunities to qualified equity-deserving groups who are historically and currently underrepresented.</p>
<p>12. Concern that planned EDI education will be mandatory and thereby violate the academic freedom of everyone at SFU / Feedback that unless aspects of the Equity Compass are mandatory, accountability will be negatively impacted / Equity Compass seen as a positive advancement of SFU-ARC Call to Action #7.</p>	<p>Letter 1/Survey</p>	<p>Operationalization</p>	<p>No content updates</p>	<p>Goal #3 is currently not intended to provide mandatory EDI education across the board. However, where SFU has already made such commitments such as the SFU-ARC Call to Action #7 or where legally required, the Equity Office will support educational programming to be developed and implemented accordingly.</p>

<p>13. Request for clear criteria to evaluate effectiveness of EDI initiatives / Concern that no metrics were stated in the Equity Compass.</p>	<p>Letter 1/Survey</p>	<p>Operationalization</p>	<p>No content updates</p>	<p>Appropriate effectiveness targets for process or outcome measures will be set and tracked as actions are further planned and taken. The Equity Compass annual report will capture progress on these metrics.</p>
<p>14. Concern that key definitions included in the Equity Compass are too limited and a more comprehensive list of definitions is needed / Definitions provided are welcomed and useful / Request for a glossary of more terms / Request for a glossary to be completed before the release of the Equity Compass.</p>	<p>Letter 1/Survey</p>	<p>Terminology</p>	<p>No content updates</p>	<p>Respondents provided conflicting feedback on terminology provided in the Equity Compass. On the one hand the definitions for equity, diversity and inclusion and the principles of the Equity Compass were welcomed. On the other, there were calls for more clarification of the language and terms and for more definitions. For clarification, as noted in Objective 2 under Goal 3, the Equity Compass includes a goal to be led by the Equity Office to develop resource guide(s) of further EDI terminology and language and/or a roster of reference resources for more in-depth explorations of the EDI knowledge base. This process is underway and the Equity Office will be working with the President’s EDI Council to develop this glossary.</p>

15. Concern that training is limited to leadership roles.	Survey	Scope of work	No content updates	Goal 3, Objective 1 is specific to training for leaders. Goal 3, Objective 2 is training for the SFU community. Edit added to clarify that training for leaders is already in place and will continue.
16. Develop training programs, education and partnerships to create a 2S/LGBTQIA+ affirming culture	Letter 2/Survey	Scope of work	No content updates	The intent of Goal 3 of the Equity Compass: Education and Capacity-Building is to support EDI learning and education broadly and certainly will include 2S/LGBTQIA+ training and education.
17. Formulate a plan to include more diverse voices in leadership positions, including 2S/LGBTQIA+	Letter 2/Survey	Scope of work	No content updates	Goal 4 on Employment Equity, and Goal 5 on Equity Data are meant to support underrepresentation of all Equity Groups. The Goals were stated to be all encompassing of equity-deserving groups.