



University for the Common Good

Glossary of Terms Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Introduction

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is an institutional priority across Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). Embedded both within and beyond the curriculum, EDI helps foster a strong sense of community and belonging. It supports inclusive approaches to recruitment, retention and development, enabling our staff and learners to thrive as active citizens in a diverse global society. Across the institution, teams including the Schools, Academic Development, Student Learning, Student Wellbeing, and People Services are [committed to providing a culture and environment which is inclusive to the needs of all individuals](#) through various charters, projects and networks. As the [University for the Common Good](#), and a civic institution that promotes social justice, GCU has a strong set of [Values and Behaviours](#) and is committed to [“excellent education and research that is accessible and impactful for the people of Glasgow and our communities locally, nationally, and internationally”](#).

There are several terms which fall under the remit of EDI that may not initially be familiar or easily understood. The following list is an introduction to EDI terms; while this list is not exhaustive, it is intended to be a living document, reflecting the evolving nature of language, identity and inclusive practice. Rather than embed the three terms of EDI into the glossary, it is crucial to define these first to highlight their individual significance, so that each concept can be understood in its own right and to provide everyone, student or staff, a shared language across the institution.

- **Equality** is about **treating people fairly**, with **dignity, and respect** and that barriers to participation and opportunity are identified and addressed. It is about providing everyone with **opportunities** to fulfil their potential, whatever their background, culture, or identity.
- **Diversity** is about **recognising, respecting, celebrating**, and embracing the rich **mix of perspectives, ideas, and values** that people bring but also

recognising the diverse **intersectionality of identities**, which includes: **Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, and Sexual orientation** which are all Protected Characteristics seen in the [Equality Act 2010](#).

- **Inclusion** is about accommodating, respecting, and welcoming the **needs and perspectives of people from different backgrounds, languages, and cultures**. It is where everyone feels they **belong**.

The GCU community is encouraged to be an EDI ally and advocate. The responsibility is not down to any one individual or EDI leads alone but collectively, change can occur where everyone feels a sense of belonging and that they matter. Additionally in the United Kingdom there is legislations which enhance the importance of EDI and further protect specific groups. For instance, [Special Educational Needs and Disability Act \(SENDA, 2001\)](#) is designed to prevent discrimination against disabled students and ensure equal access to education and related services. Moreover, the [Race Relations \(Amendment\) Act \(2000\)](#), an extension of [the Race Relations Act \(1976\)](#), was largely in response to the MacPherson report following the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, which highlighted institutional racism within public services, particularly the police. As a public institution, we have duties to follow these pieces of legislation closely.

Allyship can take many forms, as no two people share the same experiences, perspectives or starting points. It may involve learning more about EDI issues, getting involved in various groups or networks as an ally, being more attuned during class, meetings, and events as to who might be isolated, whose voice is not included or who is taking the burden of the work. Sometimes it is about unlearning what we know, as everyone's background and lived experiences are different, we may have some biases, prejudices and stereotypes against certain groups or communities.

There is an important individual journey of reflection that is required to become more aware of EDI issues and challenges people face. Why not seek out some personal development or professional training opportunities across GCU and in the wider context.

Forewarning

Some of this content and definitions used within this glossary relate to a subject matter that may be upsetting or triggering for some people.

If you are looking for support surrounding this terminology or feel that there has been harassment, sexual misconduct, or any breach of our EDI standards, please visit our [Student Wellbeing page](#), our [Report and Support page](#) for advice or email rec@gcu.ac.uk (Race Equality Charter).

Additionally, this glossary is intended as an educational resource and does not provide legal advice. Where terms have a specific legal meaning, the applicable legislation and current statutory guidance should be consulted.

Terms and Definitions

A

Ableism

A word for unfairly favouring non-disabled people. In general, ableism can be used to describe the way society and people tend to favour non-disabled people.

Accessibility

A term to indicate that people are not excluded from using something based on experiencing a disability. It means that people are empowered, can be independent, and will not be frustrated by something that is poorly designed or implemented.

Active Bystander Training

A type of training to provide the skills to support peers in challenging antisocial behaviour at work, on campus and in school, to challenge microaggressions and challenging situations.

Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD)

A group of conditions involving differences in attention span, activity levels, concentration and/or impulsivity. This is an older term that is now generally included within ADHD.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD)

A group of conditions involving differences in attention span, activity levels, concentration and/or impulsivity.

Ally

Someone who supports a group other than one's own (in terms of multiple identities such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.). An ally acknowledges oppression and actively commits to reducing their own complicity, investing in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

Antisemitism

Anti-Semitism is defined in accordance with the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\)](#) Working definition as “a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”.

Anti-racism

An active approach to identifying, challenging and changing racism at individual, interpersonal, institutional and structural levels. Anti-racism goes beyond simply not being racist and involves recognising racial inequalities and taking action to prevent discriminatory practices, behaviours and systems

Autism

A lifelong neurodevelopment characterised by differences in social communication, sensory processing, and patterns of thinking, interests and behaviour. Autism exists on a spectrum and experiences vary between individuals.

B

BAME

A UK acronym that stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. It is based on the recognition of collective experiences of systematic racism. As with other identifying terms, it is up to the individual to use this term as an identifier. It is however recommended to avoid this term as it considers BAME individuals as a homogenous group.

Belonging

A term that has increasing relevance in the EDI space. Authors [Liz Fosslien](#) and [Mollie West Duffy](#) describe the more active role of belonging: “Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard.” In this context, ‘belonging’ completes the EDI picture by giving individuals a genuine experience of being valued, heard and accepted.

Bias

A tendency, preference or inclination that influences how we perceive, interpret and make judgements about people, situations or information. Bias may be conscious or unconscious and can be positive, negative, or neutral. It is often shaped by our experiences, cultural background, assumptions and learned patterns of thinking, and may influence our decisions and behaviour without us being fully aware of it.

Bigot

A person who is obstinately devoted to their own opinions and prejudices and is intolerant towards other diverse social groups.

Bigender

A term that refers to people who experience exactly two gender identities, either concurrently or varying between the two. The latter is a form of genderfluidity. The two gender identities could be male and female but could also include non-binary identities.

BIPoC

A US acronym used to refer to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. It is based on the recognition of collective experiences of systemic racism. As with any other identity term, it is up to individuals to use this term as an identifier.

C

Carer

A carer is anyone, including children, students, and adults, who look after a family member, partner, or friend, who needs help because of an illness, frailty, mental ill health, or an addiction and cannot cope without such support.

Being a carer is not a protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010). However, carers are protected from discrimination by their association to a person with protected characteristics.

Cisgender

A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behaviour aligns with those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth.

Cisnormativity

Cisnormativity describes the societal assumption that being cisgender is the norm and thus superior, while other gender identities are considered exceptions or deviations.

Colour-blindness (racial colour-blindness)

The belief that everyone should be treated “equally” without respect to societal, economic, historical, racial, or other difference. No differences are seen or acknowledged; everyone is the same.

Cultural Appropriation

The adoption or use of elements of another culture, such as symbols, dress, language, music, traditions or practices, without sufficient understanding, acknowledgement or respect for their cultural meaning or significance. Cultural appropriation is particularly relevant where there is an imbalance of power between cultural groups, or where cultural elements are taken out of context, misrepresented, commercialised or used in ways that may cause harm or offence to members of the originating culture.

D

Decolonise

The active and intentional process of unlearning values, beliefs and conceptions that have caused physical, emotional, or mental harm to people through colonisation. It requires a recognition of systems of oppression.

Deadnaming

Refers to when someone is called by a previous or birth name after having changed their name. This more commonly is associated with transgender people who have changed their name as part of their transition. Deadnaming can be completely unintentional but also done to deliberately harass or discriminate.

Digital Accessibility

The process of making digital products, such as websites, mobile apps, Virtual Learning Environments, and other online tools technologies, accessible to everyone. It is about ensuring all users can access the same information equally e.g. captions on videos, Alt text on images and visuals and clear colour contrast.

Disability

Physical or mental impairment that affects a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

It is also important to note the **Social Model of Disability**

- This is a model developed by disabled people arguing that people are not disabled by their impairments or condition but by the barriers in society. These barriers may be physical, such as inaccessible buildings, or social such as negative attitudes, stereotypes and assumptions about what disabled people can, or cannot, do. The removal of these barriers promotes equality, independence, choice, and control for disabled people. The medical model focusses on the impairment itself rather than addressing the issues they face directly. This social model shifts the responsibility from the individual to society, encouraging inclusive environments and attitudes that enable participation in everyday life. One of GCU's core principles, [Inclusive places to study](#).

Discrimination

The unfair or less favourable treatment of an individual or group because of a particular characteristic or perceived difference. Under the Equality Act 2010, discrimination can take different forms, including direct and indirect discrimination, and may also occur through association with someone who has a protected characteristic or because someone is perceived to have one.

Discriminatory language

Discriminatory language is any spoken, written, or visual content that treats a person less favourably, harasses them, or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment because of (or connected to) a protected characteristic.

Dyslexia

A neurology which is not well-suited to certain forms of written language, leading to difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling, and

which may also include differences in concentration and planning. It is also associated with certain strengths, particularly in spatial reasoning.

Dyspraxia

(Also known as Developmental Co-ordination Disorder) – a condition associated with difficulties in movement and co-ordination, but also with strong strategic thinking.

Dyscalculia

A condition associated with difficulty in understanding number related concepts, symbols or functions needed for mathematics.

Dysgraphia

A condition in which a person has difficulties with fine motor skills such as handwriting, spelling and finger sequencing, which may affect typing.

E

Equity

The principle of fairness that recognises that individuals and groups may have different circumstances, barriers and starting points, and may therefore require different levels or forms of support, resources or opportunity to enable fair participation and outcomes. Unlike equality, which emphasises equal treatment and opportunity, equity recognises that treating everyone in exactly the same way may not always produce fairness.

G

Gender-based violence

A function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual, and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominately the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as 'gender based' this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women's and girl's subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women's vulnerability to violence.

Gender dysphoria

Gender dysphoria refers to when you feel distressed, uncomfortable or unsettled for a long time as the gender you feel you are (one's gender identity) is different to your registered sex at birth – this can also be known as gender incongruence.

Gender Fluidity

Describes a person whose gender identity, gender expression, or both, may change over time.

Gender Identity

Distinct from the term "sexual orientation," refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Non-conforming

An individual whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

Global Majority

A collective term that first and foremost speaks to and encourages those to think of themselves as belonging to the global majority. It refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities.

Gender Reassignment

This is the process, which sometimes involves surgical procedures or hormonal treatment, undertaken by a transgender person in order to transition towards the gender with which a person identifies. Gender reassignment can, but not necessarily, include undergoing some sort of medical intervention, changing of names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in a self-identified gender. Under the Equality Act (2010), this is defined as proposing to undergo, undergoing or having undergone a process to reassign sex.

Gender recognition certificate (GRC)

A gender recognition certificate enables transgender people to be issued with a new birth certificate. This is a term that is used very rarely, and some transgender people and advocacy organisations have argued that the process for obtaining a GRC can be lengthy, intrusive or burdensome. You do not need a GRC to change your gender markers at work nor on legal documents such as your passport or driving license. An employer cannot demand to see a GRC from an employee but may need to see a new birth certificate for pension purposes. Nonetheless, a GRC provides legal protections for transgender people, including criminal penalties for the 'outing' of transgender people, even if this were to be unintentional.

Glass ceiling

Is a term that acknowledges barriers, either real or perceived, to advancement in a profession, for example through promotions and hiring process. This is a term that is often applied to either a minority or marginalised group but also can be referring to issues faced by women in the workplace.

Gypsy/Gypsies, Roma/Romani and Traveller/Travellers

These are distinct peoples with diverse heritage, cultures, and experiences. In the UK, Gypsy and Traveller may refer to a range of ethnic groups, including English or Welsh Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsies, or Travellers and European Roma.

The term Gypsy is not considered a pejorative term in the UK, unless used in a derogatory manner. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are recognised ethnic minorities under the Race Relation Act and have Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act.

H

Harassment

Repeated and unwanted comments or actions that can be perceived as offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning, and unwelcome.

Hate crime/hate incident

A hate crime is a crime motivated by bias against a person's protected characteristics. This can lead to serious legal consequences, including imprisonment.

A hate incident is an act of prejudice that does not meet the legal definitions of a crime, this could appear as offensive language or behaviour but does not involve violence.

Homophobia

The irrational hatred, intolerance and fear of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.



Identity

An individual's sense of self defined by (a) a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics, (b) a range of affiliations (e.g., ethnicity) and social roles.

Implicit Bias

Negative associations expressed automatically that people unknowingly hold and that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions; also known as unconscious or hidden bias.

Inclusive Language

Language that seeks to recognise and respect the diversity of people's identities, experiences and backgrounds and avoids expressions that may stereotype, exclude, marginalise or demean individuals or groups. Inclusive language involves being aware that terminology can change over time and, where appropriate, respecting how individuals and communities describe themselves.

Inclusion

The act of creating an environment in which any individual or group will be welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a fully participating member. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces and respects differences.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes and opportunities for diverse groups based on racial discrimination.

Intersectionality

The way in which the multiple and sometimes fluid aspects of a person's identity and social position, such as race, gender, disability, age, class, religion, or sexual orientation, interact with one another and with wider social structures, creating experiences of advantage, disadvantage, or discrimination that cannot always be understood by considering each characteristic separately.

Islamophobia

is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.

“Isms”

A way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure that oppresses a person or group because of their target group. For example, race (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), older age (ageism), religion (e.g., anti-Semitism), sexual orientation (heterosexism), language/immigrant status (xenophobia), etc.

L

LGBTQIA+

An inclusive term for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual.

Lived Experience

The knowledge, understanding and perspective a person gains through their direct experience of events, identities, relationships, institutions or social conditions. In an EDI context, lived experience recognises that people may understand barriers, discrimination, inclusion and belonging differently because of their personal and social experiences.

M

Mental Health

A state of mental well-being enabling people to cope with the stresses of life, realise abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to the community, as well as build relationships and shape the world we live in.

Microaggression

The verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs, insults, or actions, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon discriminatory belief systems

Minority

According to the United Nations, minority is a term which can refer to both objective factors (such as the existence of a shared ethnicity, language or religion) and subjective factors (including that individuals must identify themselves as belonging to a national or ethnic, religious or linguistic minority group).

Multicultural Competence

The ability to communicate, interact and work effectively and appropriately within culturally diverse environments. It involves awareness of one's own cultural frame of reference and assumptions,

openness and curiosity towards different perspectives, and the ability to use empathy, perspective-taking, cognitive flexibility, and cultural adaptability when engaging with difference. Multicultural competence is an ongoing process of reflection, learning and development rather than simply acquiring knowledge about other cultures.

If you would like to learn more about this, please follow this [link](#).

N

Neurodiversity

This refers to the concept that people naturally experience and interact with the world in different ways due to variations in how their brains develop and function. It recognises that difference in areas such as sensory processing, emotions, memory, learning, communication, and information processing are a normal part of human diversity.

While everyone has unique strengths and challenges, for some individuals these differences are more pronounced. This can result in exceptional abilities in certain areas alongside significant difficulties in others. Many of these patterns of cognitive difference have been identified and given labels over time. Neurodiversity promotes understanding and acceptance of these variations, viewing them as natural difference rather than deficits, while recognising that some individuals may require support to overcome barriers and participate fully in society.

Neurodivergent

(Sometimes abbreviated as ND) As an adjective, describes a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant standards of 'normal'. For example, a dyslexic person is neurodivergent.

Neurodivergence

As a noun, the property (of a person or brain) of being significantly different from the typical.

Neurodiverse

An adjective describing populations which contain individuals with different neurology's. The word neurodiverse should not be used to describe an individual or a condition; it refers only to populations.

Neurotypical

Abbreviated as NT is often used to describe people who are not neurodivergent and falls within what society says is “normal”.

Non-Binary

Describes identities that do not fit into the man/woman binary

O

Oppression

The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures

P

Patriarchy

Actions and beliefs that prioritise masculinity. Patriarchy is practiced systemically in the ways and methods through which power is distributed in society (jobs and positions of power given to men in government, policy, criminal justice, etc.) while also influencing how we interact with one another interpersonally (gender expectations, sexual dynamics, space-taking, etc).

People of Colour

A collective term for people of Asian, African, Latina and Native American backgrounds, as opposed to the collective “White”.

Performative

Performative, in relation to EDI, is perceived as a negative term that refers to an individual or an organisation’s activist work is truly for the purpose of appearing more inclusive or progressive, rather than resulting from a sincere devotion to a particular cause or goal. It is possible that performative action does lead to lasting change, but if one is performative, it is a critique on the motives behind the action. This can also be seen as ‘Tokenism’.

Positive action

Unlike positive discrimination, positive action is a lawful action that attempts to overcome or minimise the disadvantages that people who share a protected characteristic have experienced, or to meet their different requirements, like providing mentoring or teaching to encourage staff from under-represented groups to apply for promotion.

Positive discrimination

Refers to treating an individual or a group with protected characteristics in a more favourable manner in order to counteract previous or past discrimination in a way which is seen to be unlawful.

Prejudice

A preconceived judgement or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment and can be rooted in stereotypes, which denies the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized.

Privilege

Exclusive access or access to material and immaterial resources based on the membership to a dominant social group.

Protected Characteristics

Characteristics that are legally protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. There are nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

Psychological Safety

An environment in which people feel able to speak, contribute ideas, ask questions, express concerns, acknowledge mistakes and respectfully challenge others without fear of humiliation, exclusion or interpersonal punishment. Psychological safety does not mean avoiding disagreement or difficult conversations; rather, it enables people to participate in them respectfully and constructively.

Q

Queer

An umbrella term that can refer to anyone who transgresses society's view of gender or sexuality. The definitional indeterminacy of the word Queer, its elasticity, is one of its characteristics: "A zone of possibilities."

R

Race

A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly race), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period.

Reasonable adjustment

Changes an institution makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability. For example: making changes to the physical environment, or providing equipment, services or support.

S

Safe Space

An environment in which people feel able to express their views, identities, experiences and concerns, and to participate fully without fear of discrimination, harassment, ridicule, intimidation or exclusion. A safe space does not necessarily mean a space without disagreement,

challenge or discomfort; rather, it enables these to occur respectfully and without undermining the dignity or inclusion of others.

Sexual Orientation

An individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Social Justice

Social justice constitutes a form of activism, based on principles of equity and inclusion that encompasses a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others.

Stereotype

A generalised and often oversimplified belief or assumption about the characteristics, behaviours or abilities of people based on their perceived membership of a particular social or cultural group. Stereotypes may be positive, negative, or apparently neutral, but become problematic when group-level assumptions are applied to individuals without recognising individual difference, context and personal agency.

Structural inequality

Systemic disadvantage(s) of one social group compared to other social groups, rooted and perpetuated through discriminatory practices (conscious or unconscious) that are reinforced through institutions, ideologies, representations, policies/laws and practices. When this kind of inequality is related to racial/ethnic discrimination, it is referred to as systemic or structural racism.

Structural Racism

The ways in which historical, social, economic, political and institutional structures combine to create and reproduce racial inequalities over time. Structural racism considers how inequalities across different areas of society, such as education, employment, housing, healthcare and the justice system, can interact and reinforce one another

System of Oppression

Conscious and unconscious, non-random and organised harassment, discrimination, exploitation, prejudice, and other forms of unequal treatment that impact diverse groups. Sometimes is used to refer to systemic racism.

Systemic Racism

Racial inequality that is produced and maintained through interconnected systems, institutions, policies, practices and social structures. Systemic racism does not necessarily depend upon deliberate prejudice by individuals; unequal racial outcomes can continue because disadvantage is embedded within established systems and ways of working.

T

Tokenism

Performative presence without meaningful participation. For example, a superficial invitation for the participation of members of a certain socially oppressed group, who are expected to speak for the whole group without giving this person a real opportunity to speak for her/himself.

Trans

Functions as an umbrella term to describe the experience or status of being a different gender from the gender assigned at birth.

Transphobia

Negative attitudes and behaviours towards transgender people. Transphobia can manifest in many ways, including fear, aversion, hatred, violence or anger towards people who do not conform to social gender expectations.

U

Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias is when we make judgments or decisions based on prior experience, our own personal deep-seated thought patterns, assumptions, or interpretations, and we are not aware that we are doing it.

W

White Supremacy

An ideology or system that maintains the social, political, economic or cultural dominance of people identified as White, whether consciously or subconsciously determined; and who feel superior to those of other racial/ethnic identities.

Woke

Woke, not to be confused with the past tense of wake, can be defined as someone who is aware, especially of social problems such as racism and inequality.

Woke, however, does carry negative connotations, especially as the term increasingly functions as a shorthand for political or cultural critique rather than a nuanced description of social awareness. It can lead to polarising conversations around race, gender, inclusion, and issues surrounding EDI.



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Contact

If you have any questions or feedback,
please contact

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