



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

Report of the University of Toronto Antisemitism Working Group

Submitted to the President, the Vice-President and Provost,
and the Vice-President, People Strategy, Equity & Culture

December 2021

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Introduction

The Antisemitism Working Group was planned in early 2020, and began its work in the autumn of 2020 as part of the University of Toronto's commitment to addressing forms of racism and discrimination faced by members of its community. The Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its [report](#) in 2017; the Anti-Black Racism Task Force submitted its [report](#) in April 2021; an [Anti-Islamophobia Working Group](#) was recently announced. The Report of the Antisemitism Working Group must be understood in the context of these broader institutional initiatives. It is not a response to any specific incident, nor is it in the form of an inquiry or report on a particular incident or incidents. Instead, its focus is on providing the University community with proposals about ways in which the University can provide a more inclusive space for Jewish members of its community.

An aerial photograph of a university campus, featuring a large gothic-style church with a tall spire, several large academic buildings, and green lawns. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Overview of Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

These recommendations focus only on the ways in which the University of Toronto can make itself a more inclusive and equitable place. Antisemitism is a more general problem in contemporary Canadian society, as are other forms of racism and exclusion. These recommendations aim to guide the University in dealing with antisemitism in the context of its dual commitment to academic freedom and inclusion. These commitments are not inconsistent; rather, they support each other.

1. The University should situate its policies and programs concerning antisemitism within the broader framework of its equity, anti-racism, and cultural diversity initiatives and policies, taking it as seriously as it takes other forms of racism and exclusion. It should ensure that University Equity staff are adequately equipped to address antisemitism in the same ways that they address other forms of hatred and racism, and that more general equity policies are applied consistently in cases of reported antisemitic incidents. An individual member of the University who approaches an Equity office should never be sent away to “work things out” on their own with people who violate University policies.
2. The University should explicitly include addressing antisemitism within the mandate of the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office (ARCD) and all Equity offices, ensuring that it is included in all of the University’s anti-racism training, education, and outreach campaigns. To that end, ARCD should appoint an Advisor focused on countering antisemitism, and Divisional Equity leads should be equipped to address issues of antisemitism as they arise.
3. In situating antisemitism policies within its broader framework of equity, anti-racism, and cultural diversity initiatives, the University should focus on problems and issues specific to the distinctive context of the University as a place in which difficult and controversial questions are addressed. In so doing, it should not adopt any of the definitions of antisemitism that have recently been proposed.
4. The University should frequently reiterate its commitment to academic freedom and inclusion, emphasizing in particular that academic freedom both permits people to say things that other people find troubling and, conversely, entails that individual members of the University are entitled to take whatever position they wish on controversial scientific, cultural, social, political, religious, and historical questions. In order to secure this type of academic freedom, participation in the life of the University is not conditional on taking any specific position at all on any question. Academic freedom is an individual right, the protected exercise of which depends upon every level of the University refraining from taking such positions or making public statements on such issues that will be taken to be made on behalf of their members. Academic units, administrative units, and student organizations in which enrollment is mandatory must not make participation in their activities or access to their resources conditional upon taking a particular position on any controversial question. Nor can preconditions (such as articulating positions on controversial issues) be attached to participation in academic events or discussions, or in extra- or co-curricular events and programs, or for standing for office in student organizations or academic administrative leadership positions.

5. The University should issue periodic communications about its approach to controversial events, emphasizing that it will not enforce content-based restrictions on such events, but that such events must be held in a respectful, safe, and open manner. It is inevitable that when controversial events are held, some members of the University community will be troubled by the views that are expressed. As the place where controversial issues are addressed, such discomfort and offense are the unavoidable concomitants of open discussion fostered by the University. At the same time, the University must clarify that nobody can be compelled to participate in such events, and nobody should be stopped, accosted, or harassed as they walk past a display or attend an event and told that they must respond to the claims made therein.
6. The University must develop measures for responding to various forms of social exclusion, harassment, micro-aggressions, and bullying (including online instances of these) for all equity-deserving groups, and apply these consistently.
7. The University and its divisions and academic units should apply its [Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances](#) consistently, both avoiding scheduling mandatory events on significant Jewish holidays, and permitting Jewish members of the University to participate fully in a range of accommodations. In applying such accommodations, the University must recognize that there is significant variation of religious observance within the Jewish community; Jews requesting religion-based accommodations must not be required to prove that they meet some other person's view of what qualifies as religious observance in order to be granted accommodations.
8. The University should ensure that kosher food is readily available on all its campuses.

An aerial photograph of a city street scene, featuring a large, ornate church with multiple spires and a prominent tower. The church is surrounded by other buildings, including a large, multi-story structure to the right. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "Consultation Process" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Consultation Process

Consultation Process

The Antisemitism Working Group (ASWG) consultation process commenced with an invitation to the U of T community to provide their feedback/experiences/recommendations through the ASWG e-mail account. Subsequently, the data collection process was expanded with the use of the following data collection tools:

- Dedicated e-mail account
- Survey
- Focus Groups
- Interviews

Antisemitism Working Group E-mail Account

The Antisemitism Working Group received 216 emails between December 2020 and September 2021. Authors of e-mails ranged from current students, staff, and faculty to alumni and representatives from external Jewish organizations. The account also received several offers by outside organizations to make official submissions or to assist the Working Group in preparing its report. All such offers were declined.

Survey

The ASWG Survey was launched on March 11, 2021, and closed on April 8, 2021. In total, 163 students, 200 faculty and learners (postdoctoral fellows and clinical residents), 166 staff and librarians, and 147 alumni and chaplains responded.

Focus Groups

Some survey respondents identifying as current students, staff, and faculty also participated in one of six focus groups. A total of 120 participants attended two focus group sessions.

Interviews

The ASWG extended invitations to Jewish student organizations across the tri-campus community to participate in an interview process. Interviews were held with representatives from the following groups:

- The Jewish Medical Student Association at University of Toronto
- The Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies Graduate Student Association
- Hillel U of T
- Jewish Law Students' Association
- Independent Jewish Voices University of Toronto
- UTSC Jewish Student Life

In addition, an interview was held with Jewish faith leaders from the U of T Campus Chaplain Association.

An aerial photograph of a university campus, featuring a large Gothic-style church with a tall spire, several large academic buildings, and green lawns. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Discussion of Recommendations

Discussion of Recommendations

The University's commitment to inclusion requires that it address racism as well as religious discrimination; antisemitism includes both, and should be addressed as part of the University's comprehensive approach to these issues. The manifestations are different: they are instances of more general issues that the University must address in order to meet its academic mission and aspirations of excellence and inclusion. Both antisemitic racism and antisemitic religious discrimination should be addressed in the same ways that the University deals with other forms of racism and religious discrimination. Antisemitic racism is the subject of Recommendations 1 and 2; Recommendations 6 and 7 address antisemitic religious discrimination. Although antisemitism differs from other forms of racism and religious discrimination in various ways, each is a problem for the same reason that other forms of racism, discrimination, and exclusion are problems.

Survey respondents and focus group participants reported encountering multiple types of antisemitic racism at the University of Toronto. Antisemitic racism manifests itself in conspiracy theories, according to which Jews control the world, or banks, or the media, or exert an inappropriate influence, with a unique ability to manipulate and corrupt others and processes. It further manifests itself in claims that Jews are by their nature devious or dishonest; that Jews are obsessed with money; that anyone who is wealthy is Jewish or that anyone who is Jewish is wealthy; in claims that any success that Jews have is a product of cheating or corruption; that Jews are overrepresented in positions of prestige or competitive programs; that Jews are loyal only to other Jews or only to Israel; and that all Jews are responsible for the actual or alleged acts of other Jews, including the allegation (medieval in origin) that Jews kill non-Jewish children for Jewish ritual purposes. It manifests itself in demands that Jews either disavow or defend such acts as a precondition of participation in other aspects of life, and thereby leads to a distinction between "good" and "bad" Jews that presumes that Jews are bad unless they prove themselves otherwise. It also manifests itself in Holocaust denial, or in complaints that events that draw attention to the Holocaust are part of a Jewish conspiracy or effort to curry unfair advantage.

These racist stereotypes sometimes operate explicitly through reference to "the Jews," and other times through coded language: in the nineteenth century the word "Rothschild" was meant to stand for Jews in general; more recently, "Soros" and some uses of the terms "globalist" and "Zionist" figure similarly as tropes in antisemitic stereotyping, as do images of Jews as powerful puppeteers controlling others. It also occasionally manifests crude biological images: several focus group participants reported being asked whether Jews had horns.

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Antisemitic racism manifests itself in conspiracy theories, according to which Jews control the world, or banks, or the media, or exert an inappropriate influence, with a unique ability to manipulate and corrupt others and processes.

While many such representations originated in medieval Europe, they have re-emerged in relation to contemporary issues, ranging from economic changes, the global pandemic, and vaccinations to the actual or alleged actions of the State of Israel. None of these images or representations is acceptable, regardless of the reasons for which it is made. Nor are these merely matters of representation. Many survey respondents and focus group participants reported harassment based on such representations, ranging from having coins thrown at them to being physically assaulted.

Each of the Working Group's recommendations focusses on ways in which the University of Toronto can make itself a more inclusive and equitable place.

Each of the Working Group's recommendations focusses on ways in which the University of Toronto can make itself a more inclusive and equitable place. Antisemitism is a more general problem in contemporary Canadian society, as are other forms of racism and exclusion. The explanatory comments below outline the rationale for each recommendation.

Recommendations 1 and 2:

1. The University should situate its policies and programs concerning antisemitism within the broader framework of its equity, anti-racism, and cultural diversity initiatives and policies, taking it as seriously as it takes other forms of racism and exclusion. It should ensure that University Equity staff are adequately equipped to address antisemitism in the same ways that they address other forms of hatred and racism, and that more general equity policies are applied consistently in cases of reported antisemitic incidents. An individual member of the University who approaches an Equity office should never be sent away to "work things out" on their own with people who violate University policies.

2. The University should explicitly include addressing antisemitism within the mandate of the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office (ARCD) and all Equity offices, ensuring that it is included in all of the University's anti-racism training, education, and outreach campaigns. To that end, ARCD should appoint an Advisor focussed on countering antisemitism, and Divisional Equity leads should be equipped to address issues of antisemitism as they arise.

The University has established offices for dealing with racism and exclusion, all forms of which are inconsistent with the University's mission. Antisemitism must be addressed in the same way, in order to deal with it effectively within the distinctive University of Toronto context.

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ARCD and Equity offices across the three campuses have an important role to play in addressing problems, defusing tensions, and providing education across the University. This educative role is particularly significant in the context of Student Societies in which membership is automatically determined by registration. In response to concerns about antisemitism,

several Student Societies have committed to training about antisemitism, generating further debate about which organization from outside the University should provide it. Addressing antisemitism and promoting a culture of free expression and inclusion are too important to be left to external groups, the choice between which is often regarded as a matter of politics. Instead, the University should, through ARCDO, provide educational sessions and materials on antisemitism as it does on other forms of racism and exclusion.

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Recommendation 3:

3. In situating antisemitism policies within its broader framework of equity, anti-racism, and cultural diversity initiatives, the University should focus on problems and issues specific to the distinctive context of the University as a place in which difficult and controversial questions are addressed. In so doing, it should not adopt any of the definitions of antisemitism that have recently been proposed.

Some survey respondents and focus group participants urged the Working Group to adopt a definition of antisemitism; others urged the Working Group against doing so.¹ Their comments revealed that sharply divergent views about these matters are held by Jewish members of the University community. Most of the suggestions on both sides of this issue focussed on the way in which a definition could be used to ban events to which some members of the University object, such as the annual “Israel Apartheid Week.” Some thought it important that such events be moved off campus, and asserted that a definition, in particular the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition, would be an appropriate tool for doing so; others objected to the banning of controversial speech.

Two proposed definitions were advocated, the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance “Working Definition”](#) and the [“Jerusalem Declaration.”](#) Recently, a further definition, [“the Nexus Document,”](#) has also been proposed. The three proposed definitions are succinct, but each is accompanied by interpretive guidance and examples. The IHRA definition has been adopted by several governments, including the governments of Canada and Ontario, and by some universities in the US and UK. The IHRA website describes it as “a non-legally binding working definition.” The principal drafter of the IHRA working definition, Kenneth Stern, has repeatedly cautioned *against* its official adoption as a legal or quasi-legal instrument, [particularly in the university context](#),² on the grounds that it was developed not as a way of regulating speech, but as a way of measuring trends in antisemitic incidents in Europe over time and across borders.

¹ Many of the comments about the IHRA definition received by the Working Group made points covered by witnesses before the US Congress November 7, 2017 [Hearing on Examining Antisemitism on College Campuses](#).

² A more extended discussion can be found in Stern’s book *The Conflict About the Conflict* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2020).

Stern also reviewed the experiences of academic institutions that have adopted it, where debates about its appropriateness have reproduced debates about the Middle East.³ Other scholars have challenged its adequacy as a research tool; those challenges in part inform the other proposed definitions. Both advocates and critics of the IHRA working definition have noted its potential as a basis for banning controversial speech, particularly speech and events that are critical of Israel. The other two proposed definitions contend that certain of the examples concerning speech about Israel that accompany the IHRA definition are not always antisemitic. Those definitions also emphasize that antisemitic representations sometimes figure in criticism of Israel.

The Working Group's Terms of Reference are specific to the University of Toronto context; its recommendations take no position on the wisdom or prudence of other types of organizations adopting a definition for purposes unrelated to the operation of the University.

It is relevant here to note that the Anti-Black Racism Task Force did not recommend the introduction of a definition of Anti-Black Racism as a tool for banning campus events. Nor are general definitions designed for other purposes appropriate to the University of Toronto context.

The University's distinctive position in society precludes adoption of any definition as a basis for banning the expression of controversial, troubling, or offensive views. It also precludes the adoption of any definition that demands that anyone who criticizes one country must criticize any other country that engages in similar conduct. The University is bound by the Province of Ontario's August 2018 [directive](#) to adopt principles taken from the University of Chicago's "Statement on Principles of Free Expression." The *Directive* requires in particular that several elements of the "[Chicago Principles](#)" be adopted. The *Directive* places an explicit obligation on the University of Toronto to conform to principles to which it was already committed on the basis of its policies and principles articulating its unique nature. Two of its stated principles in particular preclude content-based limits on expression:

"The university/college should not attempt to shield students from ideas or opinions that they disagree with or find offensive," and

"While members of the university/college are free to criticize and contest views expressed on campus, they may not obstruct or interfere with the freedom of others to express their views."

Those principles, and the distinction between troubling speech and disruption, give effect to the University's core commitments. The University's [Statement of Institutional Purpose](#) articulates this core commitment:

³ In some instances, such as the [Student Senate at Stanford](#), attempts were made to avoid this by referring to some examples in the IHRA definition without adopting the definition.

The Working Group's Terms of Reference are specific to the University of Toronto context; its recommendations take no position on the wisdom or prudence of other types of organizations adopting a definition for purposes unrelated to the operation of the University.

Within the unique university context, the most crucial of all human rights are the rights of freedom of speech, academic freedom, and freedom of research. And we affirm that these rights are meaningless unless they entail the right to raise deeply disturbing questions and provocative challenges to the cherished beliefs of society at large and of the university itself.

It is this human right to radical, critical teaching and research with which the University has a duty above all to be concerned; for there is no one else, no other institution and no other office, in our modern liberal democracy, which is the custodian of this most precious and vulnerable right of the liberated human spirit.

The [Memorandum of Agreement](#) between the University and the University of Toronto Faculty Association expresses this commitment in the specific context of faculty appointments:

[A]cademic freedom is the freedom to examine, question, teach, and learn, and it involves the right to investigate, speculate, and comment without reference to prescribed doctrine, as well as the right to criticize the University of Toronto and society at large. Specifically, and without limiting the above, academic freedom entitles faculty and librarians to:

- (a) freedom in carrying out their activities;
- (b) freedom in pursuing research and scholarship and in publishing or making public the results thereof; and
- (c) freedom from institutional censorship. Academic freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual nor does it preclude commitment on the part of the individual. Rather academic freedom makes such commitment possible.

“Academic freedom is the freedom to examine, question, teach, and learn, and it involves the right to investigate, speculate, and comment without reference to prescribed doctrine, as well as the right to criticize the University of Toronto and society at large...”

-Memorandum of Agreement between the Governing Council of the University of Toronto and The University of Toronto Faculty Association

As the *Memorandum* makes clear, academic freedom is in the first instance an individual right. It does not require neutrality on the part of the individual. The University’s broader commitment to providing a forum for [freedom of speech and expression](#) must be understood in the same way: members of the University are not required to be even-handed or neutral on controversial questions, or to focus their attention on the questions that others might take to be most urgent.

A culture of academic freedom and a broader culture of freedom of expression require that the University avoid taking positions on controversial questions, even if many members of the University do not believe those questions to be controversial at all. The University’s [Policy on Social and Political Issues with Respect to University Divestment](#) articulates the same principle:

The University's core academic values include freedom of inquiry and open debate. As a general matter, the University does not take positions on social or political issues apart from those directly pertinent to higher education and academic research. Instead, its role is to provide a forum within which issues can be studied carefully and debated vigorously. Given these values, the University will not consider any proposals for restrictions on its investments that require the institution to take sides in matters that are properly the subject of ongoing academic inquiry and debate. ... Except in those situations in which the University must settle on an answer to controversial questions about how best to achieve its academic mission, the University risks abandoning its core values if it takes sides in ongoing debates and is perceived to be advancing a specific political or social position.

These and other statements reflect the University's distinctive place in society. They also commit the University to avoid taking positions on controversial questions of history, foreign policy, religion, or international law. Instead, the only foreign policy the University can hold is one of being open to engagement with scholars with diverse perspectives from everywhere in the world. This same commitment underwrites the University's longstanding opposition to academic boycotts of any kind.⁴

Recommendation 4:

4. The University should regularly reiterate its commitment to academic freedom and inclusion, emphasizing in particular that academic freedom both permits people to say things that other people find troubling and, conversely, entails that individual members of the University are entitled to take whatever position they wish on controversial scientific, cultural, social, political religious and historical questions. In order to secure this type of academic freedom, participation in the life of the University is not conditional on taking any specific position at all on any question. Academic freedom is an individual right, the protected exercise of which depends upon every level of the University refraining from taking such positions or making public statements on such issues that will be taken to be made on behalf of their members. Academic units, administrative units, and student organizations in which enrollment is mandatory must not make participation in their activities or access to their resources conditional on taking a particular position on any controversial question. Nor can preconditions (such as articulating positions on controversial issues be attached to participation in academic events or discussions, or in extra or co-curricular events and programs, or for standing for office in student organizations or academic administrative leadership positions.

The University's commitment to academic freedom demands that the freedom to take up any position on controversial questions must be paired with a culture of respect and inclusion. Expression of unpopular or controversial views must not lead to any form of sanction or exclusion from other aspects of the intellectual and cultural life of the University.

⁴ See, for example, President David Naylor "[Letter to Sally Hunt](#)," June 20, 2007.

The University's commitment to academic freedom demands that the freedom to take up any position on controversial questions must be paired with a culture of respect and inclusion.

At the same time, it does not protect people who express unpopular views from disagreement or criticism by other members of the University or people outside of it.

These dual commitments to freedom of expression and inclusive debate properly inform everything the University does. The University's [Statement on Freedom of Speech](#) focusses on the need for the University to avoid purporting to resolve controversial questions:

The existence of an institution where unorthodox ideas, alternative modes of thinking and living, and radical prescriptions for social ills can be debated contributes immensely to social and political change and the advancement of human rights both inside and outside the University. Often this debate may generate controversy and disputes among members of the University and of the wider community. In such cases, the University's primary obligation is to protect the free speech of all involved. The University must allow the fullest range of debate. It should not limit that debate by preordaining conclusions, or punishing or inhibiting the reasonable exercise of free speech.

A recent [Response](#) to several "Open Letters" from the Dean of the Temerty Faculty of Medicine articulates the connection in the context of medical treatment and education:

The dual commitment to academic freedom and equity, diversity, and inclusion underlies everything we do. Medical education aims to train professionals to provide care to patients, regardless of their group membership or views about political issues. Health professionals must work with other team members again in an atmosphere of respect. They must be able to put aside any disagreements about issues other than the patient to whom they are providing care. These commitments inform everything that we do at the Temerty Faculty of Medicine.

The same point applies to the University more broadly. Although the University as a whole does not treat patients, the same dual commitment must shape the way in which it organizes its research and teaching activities. Nobody can be excluded from participation in any aspect of the University's life based on their views about controversial issues. There can be no preconditions (such as articulating positions on controversial issues) to participation in academic events or discussions, or in extra- or co-curricular events and programs, or for academic administrative leadership positions. Student societies in which membership is automatically determined by registration are required to operate in an "open, accessible and democratic" manner. As such, they should not require those standing for office to take positions on controversial issues.

The University's commitment to providing an inclusive environment imposes greater limits on the ways in which disagreement can be expressed. Not only must individual members of the University not be required to take on particular political positions as a condition of participation in any aspect of university life; they must not be compelled to take a position or even state their position on an

The University's commitment to providing an inclusive environment imposes greater limits on the ways in which disagreement can be expressed.

issue. Students, faculty and staff reported being pressed to state their position on political issues in the Middle East because they were Jewish. Sometimes they were told that it was their responsibility “as Jews” to take a particular position. Some students reported being shunned by other students because of the views they were assumed to hold. From the point of view of the operation of the University, nobody has a special responsibility as a member of a religious, ethnic, or racialized group to take any position whatsoever on any question whatsoever. To suppose that Jews are somehow different, or that because of their history Jews have a special responsibility to criticize the acts of other Jews, is straightforwardly antisemitic.

The same principles must govern the University’s interaction with scholars elsewhere. It must not have a foreign policy, or if it does, that policy must consist in openness to the world; this would encompass readiness to engage with scientists, scholars, and students from everywhere in the world. The University’s commitment to the free exchange of ideas requires that it be open to scholarly interactions with other academics and institutions everywhere in the world, and that such connections are not conditional upon the University’s approval of the conduct of the nations in which those scholars are located or on those scholars taking a position on the actions of those nations.

Recommendation 5:

5. The University should issue periodic communications about its approach to controversial events, emphasizing that it will not enforce content-based restrictions on such events but that such events must be held in a respectful and open manner. It is inevitable that when controversial events are held, some members of the University community will be troubled by the views that are expressed. As the place where controversial issues are addressed, such discomfort and offense are the unavoidable concomitants of open discussion fostered by the University. At the same time, the University must clarify that nobody can be compelled to participate in such events, and nobody should be stopped, accosted or harassed as they walk past a display or attend an event and told that they must respond to the claims made.

The University’s commitments to academic freedom and inclusion are not in tension with each other. The protection of academic freedom and the broader place of the University in a democratic society require the protection of unpopular views at every level of the University. Academic units should not take positions or purport to speak on behalf of their members, or take sides in ongoing debates or be perceived to be advancing a specific political or social position. Nor may any group use University space for an event that excludes people on the basis of their race, religion, national origin, or their position on other issues; the University’s [*Policy on The Temporary Use of Space*](#) requires that “use of University space must abide by principles which reflect the University’s purpose, mission and values.”

The University’s commitment to academic freedom and inclusion are not in tension with each other.

The requirement that academic and administrative units not take positions is a requirement of both academic freedom *and* equity and inclusion. Just as members of the University cannot be prohibited from expressing views, so, too, they cannot be required to express views. They should not be subject to pressure to endorse or oppose political causes, whether from peers or academic administrators. Individuals must be free to take whatever position they choose, including being entitled to decline to state or even take a position on controversial questions; academic units do not speak for their members any more than the University as a whole does. Full participation in other aspects of university life must not be conditional on taking what some groups of faculty or students (or indeed the majority of faculty or students) believe to be the “correct” position on issues. Just as members of the University must be protected from institutional pressure, so, too, members of the University’s academic units must be protected from inappropriate pressure from colleagues or unit-level administrators.

Just as members of the University cannot be prohibited from expressing views, so, too, they cannot be required to express views. They should not be subject to pressure to endorse or oppose political causes, whether from peers or academic administrators.

Conversely, events sponsored by members or academic units of the University are not thereby endorsed by the University. As the place where controversial issues are addressed and debated, the University must not be seen to have taken a side simply by permitting a view to be expressed, or by inviting academic speakers from countries to whose policies members of the University or an academic unit object.

All of these issues are directly relevant to expression and events related to Israel and Palestine. Positions taken in relation to these issues turn on, among other concerns, questions of history, human rights, international law, justice, and religion, as well as the relevance of each of these to the others. These are issues on which many people have strongly held views, often opposed to views held equally strongly by others. They are also the very kinds of questions for which it is the heart of the University’s academic mission to provide a forum for vigorous debate. The University must not ban such events; instead it must ensure that they are open to all members of the University community and to all perspectives. Some might consider it naïve to suppose that debate will resolve such difficult issues; others might regard the University’s refusal to take a position as an objectionable form of complacency; still others might suppose that the issues are fully settled. The University cannot give up on its core commitments, even in the face of such objections.

As the place where controversial issues are addressed and debated, the University must not be seen to have taken a side simply by permitting a view be expressed...

Recommendation 6:

6. The University should develop a framework for addressing various forms of social exclusion, harassment, micro-aggressions and bullying (including online instances of these) for all equity-deserving groups, and apply these consistently.

This recommendation is not specific to addressing antisemitism; however, many of the incidents described by survey respondents and focus group participants involved concerns about exclusion, harassment, micro-aggressions, and bullying. The University's [*Statement on Freedom of Speech*](#) cautions that "members should not weigh lightly the shock, hurt, anger or even the silencing effect that may be caused by use of such speech." This point applies to social interactions, online postings, and the power dynamic of classrooms in which controversial issues are addressed, and the power dynamics in the operations of and positions taken by academic units. None of these are grounds for banning expression in the University of Toronto context. Whatever strategies the University develops for addressing harassment, micro-aggressions, and bullying should be applied consistently.

Many of the incidents described to the Working Group involved social media and other online postings. The University will in the future need to come to terms with the interaction between academic freedom, inclusion, and social media. In working towards a culture of equity and inclusion, it must be sensitive both to the protected nature of online expression and to the ways in which exclusion, harassment, micro-aggressions and bullying that are the focus of its [*Code of Student Conduct*](#), [*Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment*](#), and [*Civility Guidelines*](#) take place online.

Recommendation 7:

7. The University and its divisions and academic units should apply its [*Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances*](#) consistently, both avoiding scheduling mandatory events on significant Jewish holidays, and permitting Jewish members of the University to participate fully in a range of accommodations. In applying such accommodations, the University must recognize that there is significant variation of religious observance within the Jewish community; Jews requesting religion-based accommodations must not be required to prove that they meet some other person's view of what qualifies as religious observance in order to be granted accommodations.

Antisemitism manifests itself both as racism and as religious discrimination. As a form of religious discrimination, it must be addressed through the University's framework of accommodations and through the development and reinforcement of a culture of respect. The [*Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations*](#) and [*Other Accommodations for Religious Observances*](#) should be applied consistently. Many survey respondents and focus group participants reported being refused accommodations outright, told that they were only entitled to accommodations if they had been granted them before, or told that they

needed to establish some level of religious observance, or even chastised for being backwards for being religiously observant. None of these responses is acceptable in relation to any request for a religious accommodation. The assumption that requests for religious accommodations by Jewish members of the University are made in service of gaining unfair advantage feeds into many forms of antisemitic racism. Nor should Jewish members of the University be required to defend their religious views when seeking accommodations to which they are entitled under the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#). Challenges to religious views are a fundamental feature of a university organized around a culture of open debate, but have no place in dealing with accommodation requests.

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The University already lists significant Jewish holidays on its Outlook calendars. It should prepare materials for faculty members and unit-level administrators on how to deal appropriately with requests for religious accommodations. Some survey respondents and focus group members, especially among staff and students in certain divisions, reported feeling isolated or being the “lone voice” in the room. The University may want to consider initiatives to deepen a sense of community and belonging for the diverse Jewish community on its campuses, including senior leadership hosting an annual meeting/gathering with leaders of campus Jewish organizations.

Recommendation 8:

8. The University should ensure that kosher food is available on all campuses, and that when Jewish members of the University request it they receive kosher food.

Survey respondents and focus group participants reported not only the unavailability of kosher food, but also, when special meals were requested, rather than receiving kosher food instead, they often received non-kosher foods regarded in the broader culture as stereotypically Jewish, such as bagels or corned beef. Such behaviour misconstrues the religious requirement for kosher food as nothing more than a nuisance preference for ethnically familiar foods. While the particular individuals offering such foods should not be accused of antisemitism, the example does underline the need for kosher food to be broadly accessible across its campuses. In addition, the University should identify vendors from whom it is available in order to make it easier for appropriate food to be provided.

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Appendices

1. Antisemitism Working Group Membership

Arthur Ripstein (Chair)

University Professor, Faculty of Law and Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts & Science

Nouman Ashraf

Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Rotman School of Management

Anita Balakrishna

Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Temerty Faculty of Medicine

Miriam Borden

PhD student, Department of Germanic Languages & Literatures, Faculty of Arts & Science

Shauna Brail

Associate Professor, Institute for Management & Innovation, U of T Mississauga

Jodie Glean-Mitchell (Project Manager)

Director, Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office

Karima Hashmani

Executive Director, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, People Strategy, Equity & Culture

Ayelet Kuper

Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, Temerty Faculty of Medicine

Faye Mishna

Professor, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work

Anna Shternshis

Al and Malka Green Professor of Yiddish and Diaspora Studies, Department of Germanic Languages & Literatures, Faculty of Arts & Science; and Director, Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies

2. Antisemitism Working Group Terms of Reference

Diversity, inclusion, and respect are fundamental values of the University of Toronto. Antisemitism remains a source of discrimination, harassment, and violence today and a threat to all free societies. It is our collective responsibility to address systemic racism, including antisemitism, within our tri-campus community and to cultivate a respectful learning and working environment for everyone.

To that end, the University of Toronto has established an [Antisemitism Working Group](#). The Antisemitism Working Group will review programming, activities, processes, and practices in place at the institution and make recommendations to support the University's response to antisemitism.

While conducting its review, the Antisemitism Working Group will:

- Consult members of the University community, including students, faculty, librarians, and staff, about how to create an inclusive environment where Jewish members of our community feel welcome and respected.
- Examine best practices at other research-intensive universities for combatting antisemitism.
- Develop an inventory of existing institutional and divisional initiatives that address antisemitism.
- Recommend actions that Equity offices and other University offices on all three campuses can take to improve education about antisemitism and responses to antisemitic incidents.
- Review the University's existing policies to determine whether existing policy tools are appropriate for dealing with issues of antisemitism.
- Propose new programs and initiatives to eliminate antisemitism on campus.
- Present a final report to the President, the Vice-President and Provost, and the Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity.

3. Antisemitism Working Group Interim Report – March 26, 2021

The Antisemitism Working Group has been soliciting input from members of the University of Toronto community. The Working Group has received a wide variety of responses, some advocating for or against various policies the Working Group might recommend and some describing troubling incidents at the University of Toronto. Many of those incidents are deeply concerning, including ones that revive hateful antisemitic tropes that have been prominent in Western culture for centuries or that reference conspiracy theories suggesting that all Jews are accountable for any actual or alleged acts committed by any Jew anywhere. Other instances involve Jewish members of the University community experiencing pressure to take a specific position on actual or alleged acts committed by Jews elsewhere as a condition of full participation in the University's activities, or put on the spot and told to speak "on behalf of Israel."

The Working Group is beginning a second round of outreach with an online survey (now closed). The purpose of the survey is to obtain more information about incidents, as well as find out whether members of the community are aware of available University supports for dealing with antisemitism and other forms of systematic discrimination. All interested members of the University community are encouraged to complete the survey. Members of the Working Group will also be arranging meetings with members of Jewish student groups across the University. Student leaders of University of Toronto groups interested in meeting with the Working Group are encouraged to write to antisemitism.working.group@utoronto.ca.

The University of Toronto is committed to providing an academic setting in which all students, faculty, and staff are able to participate fully without fear or harassment. The Antisemitism Working Group is part of a broader initiative to address multiple forms of racism and bigotry. None of these has a place at the University of Toronto, and each must be addressed in terms of its distinctive character. Antisemitism has been a problem in Western culture for centuries, and contemporary society is not free of its multiple manifestations. The Working Group will be making recommendations in the coming months about ways in which the University can address the distinctive forms of discrimination faced by Jewish members of its community.

4. University of Toronto Statement on Antisemitism and Racism – May 2016

The values of diversity, inclusion, respect, and civility are fundamental to the University of Toronto. Discrimination or harassment of individuals or groups based on race, religion, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, or any other identity as stated in the University's Statement on Human Rights is intolerable.

At the same time, we are profoundly committed to the principles of free inquiry and free expression as cornerstones of the academy. By their very nature, tolerance, respect, diversity, and inclusion are not in tension with academic freedoms. On the contrary, they ground such freedoms.

We and our predecessors have reaffirmed these principles and values many times, in response to particular circumstances.

Recently members of the community have expressed concerns about the presence of antisemitism on our campuses. Antisemitism is an ancient and pernicious form of hatred directed towards members of the Jewish community and the Jewish community as a whole. It remains a dangerous source of discrimination, harassment, and violence today and a threat to all free societies.

Others at the University have raised concerns about anti-Black racism and Islamophobia. We share the concern that such acts are equally distressing and harmful to individuals, communities and to the University of Toronto community more broadly. On behalf of the University of Toronto, we condemn racism and discrimination in all its forms.

We invite all members of the community to review the University's relevant policies, which are listed below.

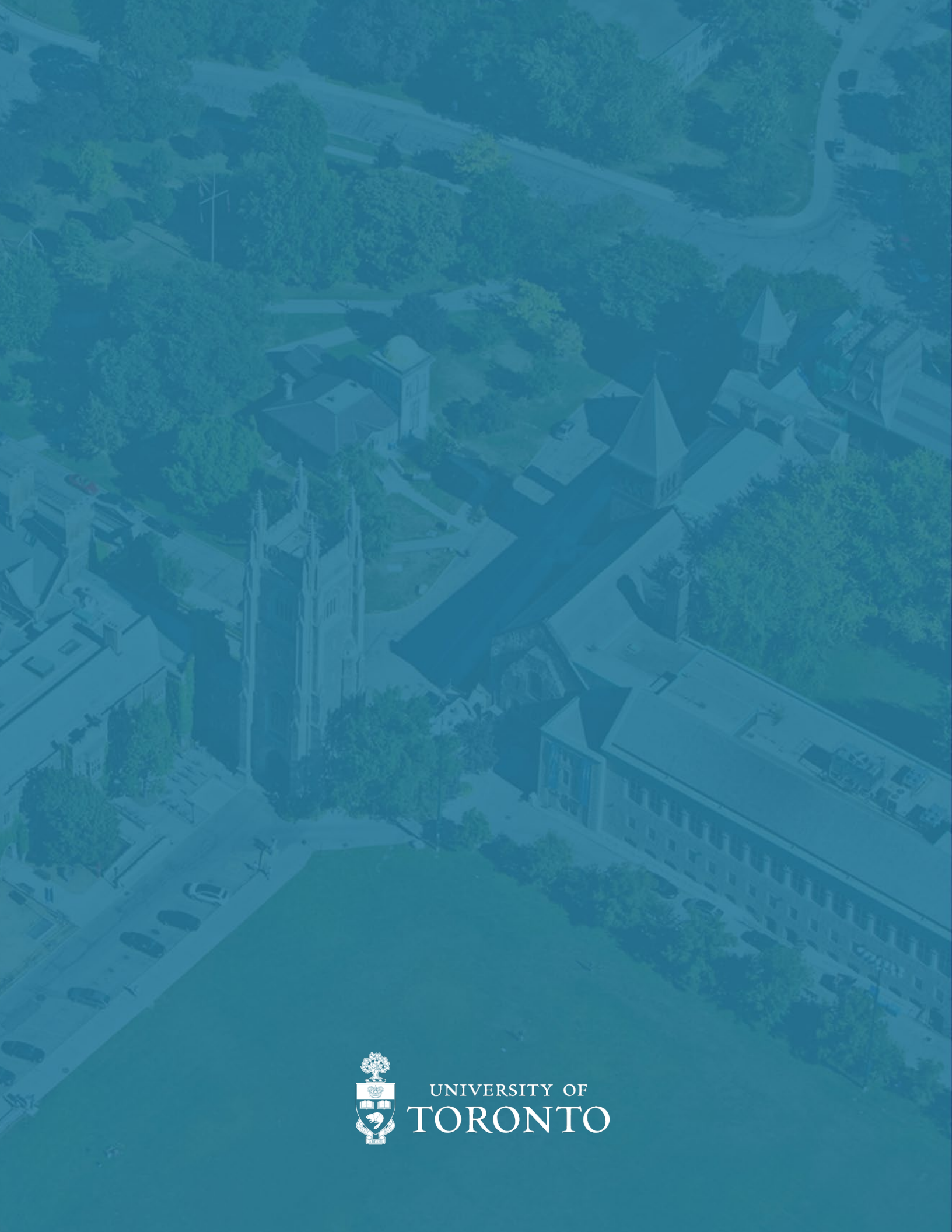
The University of Toronto is strongly committed to the values reflected in these policies. This is demonstrated not only in official statements and actions, but above all in the way members of the U of T community conduct themselves on a daily basis. We thank them for their example and for their many contributions to the culture of tolerance which is fundamental to our mission of research and teaching.

Cheryl Regehr

Vice-President and Provost

Meric Gertler

President



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO