

The purpose of this FAQ is to address several significant misunderstandings of the Report of the UofT Anti-Semitism Working Group (ASWG).

Why did the ASWG recommend against adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism?

The ASWG recommended against adopting any of the definitions of antisemitism because these definitions do not work in the context of an educational institution, the mission of whose members is to constantly research, question, and revise such definitions. Adopting a definition would mean, in effect, having the University take a position on issues that are properly debated by its researchers. The ASWG's goal was instead to help create a welcoming environment for Jewish students, faculty and staff on campus. The Working Group concluded that the most effective way to accomplish this goal is to work within the University's broader Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework. That Framework helps members of the University identify, condemn, and indeed fight all forms of mistreatment not only those forms specifically defined in the University's policies and guidelines. Members of groups experiencing discrimination are empowered to articulate the existence and impact of that discrimination; they should not be limited to existing, sometimes outdated (or fast becoming outdated) definitions.

Did the ASWG advise the University to prohibit the use or advocacy of the IHRA "Working Definition" of antisemitism on the UofT campuses?

No. In fact, the opposite is true. The ASWG endorsed the academic freedom and freedom of speech (including discussion of the range of definitions of antisemitism, debate on Israel and Palestine, and more). The Working Group's aim in recommending against adopting the IHRA definition or others that have recently been proposed was to protect speech on campus (including speech about Israel and Palestine, and various definitions of antisemitism), not to prohibit it. The ASWG recommendation that no definition be adopted protects all participants in such debate and must not be used to shut it down.

Did the ASWG Report indicate that the IHRA definition of antisemitism is wrong?

No. The report recommended against adopting any of the proposed definitions of antisemitism. It did not conclude that any of them are wrong. The report expressly notes that "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."

Did the ASWG report conclude that criticism of Israel is never antisemitic?

No. The Report did not reach that conclusion. Standard and troubling antisemitic tropes and images sometimes figure in criticisms of Israel and its policies. It is always antisemitic to suppose that all Jews are responsible for the actual or alleged acts of the state of Israel, and it is antisemitic to demand that Jewish people criticize Israel as a precondition to participation in any aspect of university life, including discussions of equity and discrimination. In addition, antisemitic claims, including allegations of dishonesty, participation in conspiracies, and obsession with money are sometimes reworded as claims about “Zionists” or “Israelis.” All such antisemitic stereotypes are objectionable.

Why doesn't the University do more to punish cases of antisemitism and other forms of racism and discrimination?

The University is committed to treating antisemitism in the same ways in which it treats other forms of racism, discrimination, and exclusion. Its policies regarding discrimination and harassment follow the Ontario Human Rights Code, and disciplinary actions can only be brought in cases that exceed the bounds of freedom of expression or academic freedom as these are understood in University policies and practices.

If I experience or witness an act of antisemitism, or have concerns that a practice, policy or procedure could be discriminatory, who should I contact?

The tri-campus Anti-Racism & Cultural Diversity Office ([ARCDO](#)) and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Offices at [UTM](#) and [UTSC](#) support concerns or complaints of harassment and discrimination (direct and systemic) based on race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship and/or creed in accordance with the [University's Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment](#).

Members of the U of T tri-campus community may contact these offices for confidential advice, information and assistance with concerns and/or complaints based on the human rights protected grounds mentioned above.