



**From the Office of the Associate Dean (Undergraduate)**

**THE DIVERSITY ADMISSIONS POLICY  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

*Please feel free to share and discuss this document with others, ask questions, and inform yourself about issues of diversity and why diversity in the teaching profession matters.*

**What is the Diversity Admissions Policy?**

The Diversity Admissions Policy guides the ways in which the faculty allocates spaces to applicants and replaces the previous “Special Considerations” policy. The policy takes into account three key factors: a) the population is becoming more diverse; b) a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives enrich educational experiences; and c) the teaching workforce has not kept pace with changing demographics of the wider society. The policy aims to admit up to 45% of students through the diversity categories of: Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, and disadvantaged.

**Why was the Diversity Admission Policy created and why now?**

Our previous “Special Consideration Policy” was enacted in 1992. Given the changing diversity of Manitoba and revisions to The Manitoba Human Rights Code, it was necessary to conduct a review of the policy and make changes. One of the UM’s Strategic Priorities is to *build community that creates an outstanding learning and working environment* by “increasing student, staff, faculty and leadership diversity that reflects society, especially with respect to the inclusion of women, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities, and racialized minorities.” Many UM faculties have identified admission priority groups including Nursing, Social Work, Asper School of Business, Medicine, Law, and Kinesiology and Recreation Management. Not only is the Diversity Admission Policy consistent with UM policies and priorities, it reflects priorities of the wider educational system including the Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning’s ethnocultural equity agenda and hiring policies in various school divisions.

**When was the policy passed and when will it take effect?**

The Policy was approved at the UM Senate meeting on January 6, 2016, and will take effect in fall 2017.

**Was there consultation with parties outside of the Faculty of Education?**

Yes. Over the past three years the Faculty consulted widely with many community groups and experts, including the Manitoba Teachers’ Society, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, Manitoba Aboriginal Education Directorate, Rainbow Resource Centre. On our campus, we sought feedback from the Aboriginal Student Centre, Student Advocacy and Accessibility, and Student Affairs and Admissions. We also consulted regularly with human rights experts. The policy went through dozens of drafts and had to be approved by a multitude of committees, all of which include members of the student body and of the community.

### **Are these quotas?**

No. *Quota* means that all spaces MUST be filled regardless of whether the applicant meets the requirements. This policy has *targets*, which means that these are goals that we aspire to meet.

### **What happens if the diversity categories targets don't get filled?**

All unfilled Diversity spots will be reallocated to the General pool, thereby filling all available admission spaces.

### **Why not just admit the “best and the brightest”?**

We continue to maintain rigorous academic standards for entry to the B.Ed. Program. All applicants must meet the same requirements: achieve a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.50, complete a written test (which is graded), and provide three letters of reference. All applicants, regardless of any self-identified categories, must compete for admission based on highest composite scores.

There are several issues with the “best and brightest” argument. First, it incorrectly assumes that students constitute a homogenous group and that one form of “best” is best for all students.

Further, terms such as “best and brightest” are highly subjective. Some people may consider the “best and brightest” as those applicants with the highest GPA, those who get good marks on assignments, and/or those who successfully complete a B.Ed. program. Others may define “best and brightest” in terms of particular characteristics, dispositions, or perspectives. Regardless, each definition is value-laden and assumes a particular stance towards what and who make the most effective teachers.

We believe that what is “best” for our faculty and for the communities we serve is to have a diverse student body that reflects our communities. The research tells us that a more diverse teaching force benefits students by providing opportunities for minority students to develop positive relationships with teachers that they perceive as “like” them, by allowing students to feel that their perspectives are better understood (perspectives that include cultural, linguistic, sexual identity, gender orientation, or differing world views), and by having teachers who understand and will attend to acts of oppression. All students in Manitoba will encounter diversity in their communities and learning to engage appropriately with diversity can and should happen in schools. A more diverse teaching force is “best”; it provides a greater variety of perspectives and creates a richness that not only reflects Canadian values of democracy and inclusion, but benefits students and teachers alike.

### **How will the Faculty of Education support a more diverse student body?**

We recognize that our physical space, as well as our programs, policies, practices, and pedagogies must reflect principles of diversity and equity. Although we have begun this work, there is more to do.

Support is provided to current and future students by our academic advisors and our front line staff, the UM's Student Advocacy and Accessibility Services (which provides support and advocacy for students with disabilities), and our faculty's Accessibility Advisory Committee that creates and monitors policies and procedures in order to best support students with disabilities. We also have an Accommodations Team that works with students to create appropriate accommodations when necessary.

Our faculty has Arc Education (similar to that of a gay-straight alliance) which strives to create safe spaces for LGBTTTQ students, faculty and staff and their allies; explores issues surrounding sexual and gender diversity; and provides guidance on the process of creating gay-straight alliances. Additionally, our students have access to other student groups such as the Education Student Council that provides advocacy, professional development, and social networking; the Aboriginal Student Association (UMASA); and our faculty's Indigenous Student Group.

Our faculty has a Director of Indigenous Initiatives who is responsible for advancing Indigenous achievement by positively influencing teaching, research and service related to the field of Indigenous education. Under the leadership of the Committee on Initial Teacher Education Programs (CITEP), our faculty has engaged in a number of discussion groups regarding issues of diversity and equity and has involved experts from the field and from our campus. As a faculty, we are committed to developing our own understandings of diversity and equity and strive to enhance responsiveness in our programs, courses, and pedagogies.

### **Isn't this policy a form of "social engineering"?**

Social engineering is the use of laws or policy to create or improve a social condition or to solve a social problem. All laws and policies (i.e., decision-making) are a form of social engineering. Systemic prejudice—through laws and policy—is a part of Canada's history. In Manitoba, for example, women were not allowed to vote until 1916, while First Nations peoples did not get the unfettered right to vote until 1952. It wasn't until 2013 that Bill 18 provided legislation that protected students' rights to form gay-straight alliances in their schools, until which time such a practice was often prohibited. The findings from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission show that Indigenous, Métis and Inuit peoples were subject to years of legislation and policy that marginalized, excluded and punished people solely on the basis of racialization. These are examples of how legislation and policies can marginalize certain groups of people. The Diversity Admission Policy is overtly countering previous laws and policies that have created and perpetuated social and historical injustices.

### **Isn't this policy "reverse discrimination"? Doesn't the Charter protect the rights of everybody?**

Within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the "Equality Rights" section (15.1) states that, "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination..." This means everyone has the right to be treated equally.

The next section (15.2) states that "Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object *the amelioration of conditions* of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability." This means that laws or policies that attempt to ameliorate or change conditions for those that have been disadvantaged **are supported** and **are not** considered discriminatory. Whereas the section 15.1 attends to *equality*, section 15.2 attends to *equity*, or the notion that different people need *different* (not equal) things to be considered fair.

This means that policies that attempt to ameliorate or change conditions of disadvantage—those that work to right the historical wrongs—are supported by the Charter.

### **The category of "disadvantaged" seems vague. What does it mean?**

The term socially disadvantaged was recently adopted by and is a protected characteristic within The Manitoba Human Rights Code, and occurs when a person experiences "diminished social standing or

social regard” arising from homelessness, low levels of education, chronic low income and chronic under- or unemployment. Although economic disadvantage is a part of social disadvantage, the term social disadvantage attempts to encompass negative stereotypes an individual might experience from other negative circumstances.

**How did you come up with these numbers?**

Extensive research was conducted that reviewed a breadth of statistical data as well as specific research on the teaching workforce and diversity. The numbers seek to diversify—not to mirror—the population, as the diversity of Manitobans varies over time and between places. For example, Indigenous peoples make up 15% of Manitoba’s population, 10% of Winnipeg’s population, and 27% of the Winnipeg School Division’s student population. People who identify as visible minorities make up over 15% of Winnipeg’s population and this group is growing rapidly. Yet, teachers who are identified as “visible minorities” make up less than 6% of Manitoba’s teaching force. Therefore, the numbers acknowledge the trends of Canada’s changing population and provide targets to meet.

**If there are more female teachers than males, then why not include men in the policy?**

While classroom teachers are predominately female, those in positions of power within the teaching force (principals and superintendents) remain predominantly male. Generally speaking, men have not been subject to systemic sexism or historical injustice and so compensatory policies are not warranted.

**How will you protect the privacy of applicants who self-identify in a diversity category?**

Students choose to self-identify within any diversity category. Applicant information is stringently managed by policies of confidentiality and is protected by privacy legislation.

**Can’t applicants lie to get in?**

As potential teacher candidates, we elect to treat applicants with dignity and respect by presuming they are being truthful. All applications are governed by the policies of the Admissions office, and providing false information in any part of the application is a serious offence with significant consequences.

**If I apply to the General Category, what does this mean for my chances of getting in?**

Generally speaking, the number of people applying to B. Ed programs is decreasing across Canada and so entrance to these programs is less competitive than it used to be. If you are applying in the General Category and have a competitive composite score (i.e. have a strong GPA, do well on the writing test and have solid references), your chances of getting into a B.Ed. program are good.

**If two applicants have the exact same composite score and one is in the General Category and one has identified in one of the Diversity categories and there is only one spot left what happens?**

The person who identifies in one of the diversity categories will be selected. That is the point of the policy: to provide an advantage to those that have been socially or historically disadvantaged. It is a chance to “level the playing field” for someone who has experienced disadvantage.

**Who can I speak with if I have further questions?**

If you have more questions, you can ask faculty members, instructors, academic advisors and fellow students.