

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Path Forward: Anti-Racism Working Group Report

Guelph Institute of Development Studies

January 2023

In order to implement the pledges included in the [GIDS statement of solidarity](#), the GIDS Anti-Racism Working Group (“the Working Group”), was convened, which consists of associated faculty, staff, students, alumni, and External Advisory Board Members of the Institute. The Working Group was established to understand the experiences of GIDS students, staff, and faculty in relation to racism within the Institute, with a particular focus on the perspectives and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) within the Institute.

In early 2021, the Working Group developed online surveys that were sent to alumni, students, faculty, and staff. It then conducted a preliminary analysis of the data and contracted with Turner Consulting Group in Fall 2021 to supplement the data collected through focus groups and interviews held in early 2022.

Key findings:

Consultation participants shared a number of concerns about their experiences at GIDS, the University of Guelph, and the city of Guelph. The key issues include:

- The lack of diversity in the classroom and among faculty was identified as a concern owing to its far-reaching implications, including its impact on the quality of classroom discussions, the availability of mentorship opportunities afforded to graduate students, the courses offered, and how racism is addressed.
- Some BIPOC and White students, staff, and faculty shared that they have witnessed and experienced racist comments and behaviour but that they have not always been addressed effectively. While respondents did not report that these were frequent experience, they reported that when they did occur, these comments and behaviours have negatively impacted their learning and working environments,

impacting their mental health, their course selection, their participation in classes, and their ability to work.

- Students reported insufficient representation of diverse voices in courses, classroom discussions, and opportunity to discuss issues related to race. While there is variation in the extent to which this happens across courses, faculty are more likely to report that they address these topics in their courses. Students also reported that while racial issues may be discussed in class as they arise, discussions are not always appropriately facilitated and inappropriate comments are not always addressed.
- While the majority of students and alumni indicate that they are not aware of the process/procedures for handling such complaints, the majority of staff and faculty reported that they are aware of the university's process/procedures for addressing these issues. However, the vast majority of all survey respondents expressed a lack of confidence that the university would respond appropriately.

Calls to Action

Given the findings from the consultations, the following Calls to Action were identified to address the issues and concerns raised by the GIDS community:

- Call to Action 1: Communicate GIDS' commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression
- Call to Action 2: Communicate university policies and procedures for addressing discrimination and harassment, and establish prompt, effective, and confidential channels to address these issues when they do occur
- Call to Action 3: Increase diversity among IDS faculty and advocate for increased diversity in other departments
- Call to Action 4: Diversify the undergraduate student population
- Call to Action 5: Diversify and decolonize the curriculum
- Call to Action 6: Enhance capacity of faculty to create and maintain respectful and inclusive classroom environments, facilitate discussions about race, and address issues when they do arise
- Call to Action 7: Raise student awareness and understanding of racism, oppression, and their impacts
- Call to Action 8: Create opportunities for BIPOC students and faculty to gather
- Call to Action 9: Provide information about available supports for BIPOC students, staff, and faculty