

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Terms

** This glossary is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every word and term used in our work and conversation about diversity, inclusion, and social justice. These are basic working definitions to be used as a reference to help move diversity and inclusion efforts forward within Student Life at the University of Houston.

Ability - power or capacity to do or act physically, mentally, legally, morally, financially, etc.

Access - creating the necessary conditions so that individuals and organizations desiring to, and who are eligible to, use our services, facilities, programs and employment opportunities.

Ally - a person of one social identity group who stands up in support of members of another group; typically member of dominant identity advocating and supporting a marginalized group.

Asexual - person who is not sexually attracted to anyone or does not have a sexual orientation. They may or may not experience romantic attraction.

Bisexuality- a sexual orientation in which a person has the potential to feel physically and emotionally attracted to more than one gender.

Culture - is a way of life of a group of people--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Cultural Competence - refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises four components: (a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) Attitude towards cultural differences, (c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) Cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period.

Disability - a physical, mental or cognitive impairment or condition that requires special accommodations to ensure programmatic and physical access.

Diversity - psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals; including but not limited to race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, genetic information and learning styles. A diverse group, community, or organization is one in which a variety of social and cultural characteristics exist.

Ethnicity - a social construct which divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base.

Equality - evenly distributed access to resources and opportunity necessary for a safe and healthy life; uniform distribution of access that may or may not result in equitable outcomes.

Equity - is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.

Gay - A common and acceptable word for male homosexuals, but used for both genders.

Gender - the socially constructed ideas about behavior, actions, and roles a particular sex performs.

Gender Identity - a personal conception of one's own gender; often in relation to a gender opposition between masculinity and femininity. It is how people externally communicate or perform their gender identity to others.

Gender Expression - an individual's outward and *external* gendered appearance. This may include hair styles, clothes, accessories, and mannerisms. Gender expression may also include gender roles which are also defined by an individual's culture/society.

Genetic Information - Genetic information includes information about an individual's genetic tests and the genetic tests of an individual's family members, as well as information about the manifestation of a disease or disorder in an individual's family members (i.e. family medical history).
(<https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/genetic.cfm>)

Inclusion - the act of creating involvement, environments and empowerment in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate with equal access to opportunities and resources embrace differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.

Intercultural competence - is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions.

LGBTQAAI - The acronym that means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. The addition of a "Q" at the end often means "questioning" or "queer." One "A" stands for "asexual", another for "allies". The "I" means "intersex".

Lesbian- A common and acceptable word for a female homosexual only.

Marginalization - Treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant or pervasive and places them outside of the mainstream society.

Micro aggressions - intentional or unintentional verbal, nonverbal or environmental slights/insults that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to people based upon their marginalized group.

Multiculturalism - the practice of acknowledging and respecting the various cultures, religions, languages, social equity, races, ethnicities, attitudes, and opinions within an environment. The theory and practice promotes peaceful coexistence of all identities and people.

Power - ability to control, coerce or influence people based on privilege identities. Power may be positional and provide access to social, political, and economic resources.

Power-over - used in discriminatory and oppressive way. Having power over others and therefore domination and control over others (e.g. through coercion and violence)

Power-with - shared with all people in struggles for liberation and equality. Using or exercising one's power to work with others equitably, for example, in a social movement.

Privilege - any unearned benefit, right or advantage one receives in society by nature of their identities

Queer - Some LGBTQ people use this term as a way of reclaiming the power associated in the past with this term and other derogatory terms (such as fag or dyke). Others use it as a more general all-inclusive term to represent a variety of sexual orientations and/or gender identities or anything that defies easy definition or categorization. Like any term or label, there is no general consensus on what Queer means, and it is still considered offensive by older generations.

Race - a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the political needs of a society at a given period of time.

Respect - a feeling or understanding that someone or something is important, valued and should be treated in a dignified way

Sexual Orientation - the direction of one's sexual attraction toward the same gender, opposite gender, or other genders. It is on a continuum and not necessarily a set of absolute categories.

Social Construct - An idea that appears to be natural and obvious to people who accept it but may or may not represent reality

Social Justice- to take action as an advocate for a just society where all people have a right to fair and equitable treatment, support and resources

Transgender

1) An umbrella term for transsexuals, cross-dressers (transvestites), gender queers, and people who identify as neither female nor male and/or as neither a man nor as a woman. Transgender is not a sexual orientation; transgender people may have any sexual orientation.

2) Transgender people are those whose psychological self ("gender identity" – one's internal experience of their gender) differs from the physical sex with which they were born ("biological sex" - one's body -genitals, chromosomes,

etc.). Often, society conflates sex and gender, viewing them as the same thing. However, gender and sex are not the same thing.

This resource was adapted from existing resources provided by the National Multicultural Institute, University of California-Berkeley-Diversity Terms, National Conference for Community and Justice, Oregon State University, Texas A & M University, Arizona State University – Intergroup Relations Center, and The National Center for Transgender Equality, Cleveland State University, Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, Deardorff, Darla (2006) "The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States." Journal of Studies in International Education 10:241-266, Adams, Bell and Griffin-Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice