



Fact Sheets

For Brandon University Students

Pervasive toxic “isms” are experienced by students, staff, and faculty far too frequently. The results of “isms” on the health and well-being of individuals experiencing them are detrimental.

One of the best ways to fight against “isms” is to give tools to those who experience, see, or promote them. Another is to recognize that all individuals have biases (either conscious or unconscious). Sometimes those biases may need to be labeled and addressed to reduce the oppression that results from them.

For that reason, we have created 3 fact sheets:

Witnessing “isms” in classroom

Experiencing “isms” from people in a position of power

Formal Complaint Process

In these fact sheets, we refer to “isms.”

This includes all acts of oppression and inequality that are a result **of conscious or unconscious bias**. There are different types of “isms” to consider. All forms of “isms” play out in different ways, and one of the main elements is power.

“Isms” are any type of discrimination, prejudice, or stereotyping against individuals based on their identity.

Examples are:

Race **Racism**

Sex **Sexism**

Age **Ageism**

Sexuality **Heterosexism**

Social Class **Classism**

Physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities **Ableism**

----- This is important because... -----

“Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future and renders the present inaccessible.”

- Maya Angelou

Written By: Cheryl Fleming, Princess Eze, Divina Suazo, and Candice Waddell-Henowitch.
Thanks to the FHS EDI Committee and the broader University Community for their review and oversight.

Special thanks to Jan Marie, Derrick, Catherine, Jen, Karen, Tarissa, and Akech.

Design Work: Jeremy Carter

Project Supported Financially by the Anti-Racism Committee and CTLT.

Copyright: Brandon University





Fact Sheets

For Students in the Faculty of Health Studies

Systemic “isms” are common in academic environments. Their impact on the health and well-being of students, staff, and faculty is deeply harmful and cannot be ignored.

One of the best ways to fight against “isms” is to give tools to those who experience, see, or promote them. Another is to recognize that all individuals have biases (either conscious or unconscious). Sometimes those biases may need to be labeled and addressed to reduce the oppression that results from them.

For that reason, we have created 4 fact sheets:

Witnessing “isms” in classroom or clinical settings

Experiencing “isms” from people in a position of power

Experiencing “isms” from a client or patient

Formal Complaint Process

In these fact sheets, we refer to “isms.”

This includes all acts of oppression and inequality that are a result **of conscious or unconscious bias**. There are different types of “isms” to consider. All forms of “isms” play out in different ways, and one of the main elements is power. “Isms” are any type of discrimination, prejudice, or stereotyping against individuals based on their identity.

Examples are:

Race **Racism**

Sex **Sexism**

Age **Ageism**

Sexuality **Heterosexism**

Social Class **Classism**

Physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities **Ableism**

----- This is important because... -----

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences”

- Audre Lorde



Written By: Cheryl Fleming, Princess Eze, Divina Suazo, and Candice Waddell-Henowitch.
Thanks to the FHS EDI Committee and the broader University Community for their review and oversight.

Special thanks to Jan Marie, Derrick, Catherine, Jen, Karen, Tarissa, and Akech.

Design Work: Jeremy Carter

Project Supported Financially by the Anti-Racism Committee and CTLT.

Copyright: Brandon University

Witnessing “isms” while in Classrooms or other University Settings

When students at Brandon University witness “isms”, it is important to respond effectively: address the issue, protect your well-being, and uphold the institution’s standards. This way, Brandon University can stay respectful and inclusive for all.

----- This is important because...



“The world needs all kinds of minds”

- Dr. Temple Grandin

Steps to Take

1 Ensure Personal Well-Being

Take care of yourself emotionally and mentally: Witnessing an “ism” can be emotionally distressing. Ensure that you are taking care of yourself when dealing with these issues.

Assess safety: If the situation is escalating or if you feel threatened, prioritize your safety and remove yourself from the situation if possible.

2 Speak to the individual experiencing the “ism”

Speak to the individual: If the situation feels safe and appropriate, you can approach the individual that experienced the “ism” to express your concern. Use “I” statements.

Discuss the next steps: What does the recipient of the “ism” need for support? Inquire with curiosity and without judgement.

Approach the Source: If the individual experiencing the “ism” wants to approach the source, support them to have that conversation. Remember the goal of the conversation will be to engage and educate.

▶ **Example:** “We are wondering if we can have a conversation with you regarding the comment you made about our colleagues/my accent. **The comment made us/me feel** _____. We would like to seek clarity on why you felt that our colleagues/my accent is interfering with patient care.”

“ I noticed that Bob commented that your accent was interfering with patient care, and I didn’t appreciate the comment. Are you ok? Do you want to talk about it? ”

3 Document the Incident

Record the details: Write down everything you remember about the incident, including the time, location, what was said or done, who was involved, and whether anyone else witnessed the event. This documentation can be important for later steps in addressing the issue. If these actions don’t resolve your issue, please consider the **formal complaint process (Fact Sheet)**.

Experiencing “isms” from a Person in a Position of Power

When students at Brandon University face “isms” from someone in a position of power, it’s important to respond effectively: Address the issue, protect your well-being, and uphold the institution’s standards. Students can help hold faculty accountable by documenting the incident, reporting it, seeking support, and advocating for change. This way, Brandon University can stay respectful and inclusive for all. **This is important because...**



“Hope will never be silent”

- Harvey Milk

Steps to Take

1 Ensure Personal Well-Being

Talk to a trusted peer or mentor: Sharing your experience with someone you trust can help you process what happened and give you advice on how to proceed. This could be a trusted peer or mentor or a counsellor.

Seek emotional support: Experiencing “isms” can be deeply distressing, so it’s important for students to prioritize their mental health. Reach out to peers or friends, family, or a counselor who can provide emotional support and guidance.

Create a safe space for reflection: Take time to process the incident. Talking with trusted individuals or journaling can help you make sense of what happened and decide on your next steps.

2 Document the Experience

Record the details: Documenting the experience as soon as possible helps ensure that all relevant facts are captured. Include details like the date, time, location, what was said or done, who was involved, and any potential witnesses.

This documentation can be helpful if you decide to report the incident formally.

Keep track of any follow-up: If the incident escalates or you report it, keep records of any communications, meetings, or actions taken regarding the issue.

3 Address the Issue Directly with the Faculty Member (If Safe)

Approach the faculty member (if safe): Consider bringing a support person. This could be a friend, family, a trusted peer, someone from a university committee, or a trusted advisor. When approaching the faculty member, express your concerns and how their actions or words affected you.

Be direct and respectful: Acknowledge and accept your emotional reaction. Responding to isms is hard and you may have a range of emotions. It might be hard to approach the person that has made an inappropriate comment, but by sharing your perspective and experience respectfully and directly, you can help to clarify any misunderstanding and prompt the person in a position of power to reconsider their behaviour. If these actions don’t resolve your issue, please consider the **formal complaint process (Fact Sheet)**.

“ I would like to talk to you about the comment you made about my accent. The comment made me feel...”

Dealing with “isms” from a Patient or Client

The **ACTION** Framework

When a patient or client expresses biased, discriminatory, or harmful views, it's important to respond thoughtfully while maintaining professional care. The mental status and/or cognitive ability of the client/patient needs to be considered prior to determining your response. Some client/patient may express “isms” as part of their illness, although this is disturbing the approach to the client/patient will be different. In situations like this, you should remove yourself from the situation (once safety is established) and find someone to debrief with. **This is important because...**



“It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.”

- E. E. Cummings

The **ACTION** acronym offers a step-by-step guide for addressing these moments while preserving psychological safety for both the clinician and the client.

Ensure Patient/Client Personal Well-Being

Before engaging in any difficult conversation, make sure the patient/client is physically and mentally stable. If they are in distress, your priority needs to be providing essential care. Address the incident only once stability is confirmed.

A Ask a clarifying question

Asking a clarifying question creates space for the patient/client to reflect on what they said and may also make them realize the inappropriateness of their comment. It also avoids assumptions and opens dialogue. **Example:** “Can you help me understand what you meant? or “I’m sorry, I didn’t hear you, could you please repeat what you said?”

C Come from curiosity

Approach the situation with genuine curiosity rather than judgment. This can de-escalate tension and allow for a more open conversation. **Example:** “I’m curious about where that perspective comes from.”

T Tell what you observed

If you don’t feel that you can ask a question directly, then you can respectfully and directly state what you heard or saw. **Example:** “I noticed that you referred to the nurse by a derogatory term”

I Impact Exploration

Whether you ask a question or tell what you saw, the next step is to always invite the patient/client to consider the impact of their words or actions. This centers the effect on others rather than labeling the person. **Example:** “When terms like that are used, it can be deeply hurtful to others and affect the care environment.”

O Own thoughts and feelings

Name your own reactions using “I” statements. This shows authenticity and personal accountability. **Example:** “I felt uncomfortable when I heard that comment, and I want to make sure this is a respectful space for everyone.”

N Next Steps: Take appropriate actions to ensure safety, boundaries, and accountability:

Remind the patient of roles:

Reaffirm the boundaries and responsibilities of the caregiver-patient relationship. **Example:** “I’m here to help with your health concerns, and I expect our interactions to remain respectful.”

Remove yourself from the situation (if necessary):

If the behavior continues or becomes hostile, it may be appropriate to step away temporarily.

Find a peer or supervisor to debrief:

Processing the incident with a trusted colleague can help you manage emotional impact and determine follow-up steps.

Formal Complaint Process

1 Understand Your Rights and University Policies

Know your rights: (<https://www.brandonu.ca/diversity/discrimination-and-harassment-prevention-policy-procedures/>). These documents outline the expectation for faculty, staff, and student behaviour and the steps for addressing incidents of harassment and discrimination.

2 Report the Incident

Report to someone: If the situation involves another student, report directly to the faculty member. If you don't feel comfortable addressing the issue with a faculty member, the faculty member is the one causing the disturbance, or the issues hasn't been resolved then report the incident to the department chair, the program coordinator, or another faculty member you trust. Faculty members in these roles may be able to help you to address the problem internally.

Diversity and Human Rights Advisor: Brandon University has a Diversity and Human Rights office that can handle complaints about discrimination and harassment. You can file a formal complaint with this office, which will investigate the matter and take appropriate action based on the university's policies.

Office of Student Services: You can also reach out to the Office of Student Services for guidance on how to proceed with a formal complaint or seek support in dealing with the situation.

4 Follow Up and Advocate for Change

Follow up with the relevant authorities: After reporting the incident, make sure to follow up to ensure that the matter is being taken seriously and that appropriate steps are being taken to address it. If you do not feel satisfied with the outcome, you can escalate the issue to higher authorities within the university.

Join or support student advocacy groups: Become part of the solution. Join or support student advocacy groups that focus on equity to bring about positive change.

Advocate for anti-"ism" training: Whether through formal complaints or student-led initiatives, advocating for mandatory anti-"isms" training for all members of the university community can help prevent similar incidents in the future and foster a more inclusive and respectful environment.

5. External Resources

MB Human Rights Commission: If you feel that the situation is not being adequately addressed at the university level, you may seek assistance from external organizations like the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, which can offer additional support and take further action.

3 Seek Further Support

Counseling Services: Experiencing isms can be emotionally draining, and students should feel empowered to seek counseling services available through the university. These services can help you manage feelings of stress, anger, or trauma resulting from the experience.

Peer Support Groups: Sometimes, connecting with other students who may have experienced similar issues can provide support and solidarity. Many student groups on campus focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. Find a committee that is active in your faculty or reach out to the student union.



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"

- Martin Luther King Jr.

If you Intentionally or Unintentionally Perpetuate an “ism”

If a faculty member at Brandon University is accused of an “ism” by a student, it is important to handle the situation with care, responsibility, and ensure a fair and respectful process.

Faculty members must listen to the students’ concern, reflect on one’s own actions, seek guidance from the appropriate university resources, and take steps to resolve the issue in a fair and transparent manner. By following university protocols, engaging in self-reflection, and committing to ongoing education on these matters, faculty members can contribute to creating a safer and more inclusive environment for all students at Brandon University. **This is important because...**



“To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others”

– Nelson Mandela

Here are the steps that need to be taken:

1 Remain Calm and Professional

Acknowledge the concern: Regardless of the nature of the concern, the first step is to listen, respond with respect, and avoid becoming defensive. Isms are serious, and they should be taken seriously, even if the faculty member does not feel that their actions were intentionally harmful.

Approach with empathy: Recognize that the student may be experiencing distress or hurt and acknowledge their feelings. Let the student know that their concern has been heard.

2 Clarify the Situation

Listen without judgment: Allow the student to speak without interrupting or immediately defending yourself. Create space for an open and constructive dialogue.

Ask for clarification: In most situations, when you are approached with perpetuating and ism, it is because of your actions and is not meant to be a description of your character. Therefore, ask for clarification, try to understand where the individual is coming from and think about the details of the event. What was said or done? When and where did it happen? You are not trying to “test” the individual or defend yourself through questioning, rather the clarification can help you to decide what you can do better in the future or clarify if the incident was a misunderstanding.

3 Document the Interaction

Keep a record: Document the conversation, including the details of the concern and any steps that were taken to address it. Documentation is important for transparency and accountability, and it may be necessary for formal processes.

Consider witnesses: If the incident took place in a public setting or involved other students or faculty members, it might be helpful to have a record of their perspectives or any relevant information they can provide.

4 Reflect on the Accusation

Examine your own actions: After hearing the student’s concerns, take time to reflect on the incident from their perspective. Consider whether any of your words or behaviors could have unintentionally caused harm, regardless of intent.

Recognize implicit bias: If appropriate, engage in self-reflection on issues of privilege, implicit bias, or cultural competency. “Isms” are often unintentional or the result of unconscious bias that may not be obvious. Faculty members should be willing to engage in learning if necessary.

5 Seek Guidance and Support

Consult a mentor, Dean, or senior faculty: If unsure of how to respond to the concern or how to handle the situation, seek advice from a trusted colleague, mentor, or senior faculty member who can offer guidance and support.

Consult with the Diversity and Human Rights Office: Contact the university's Diversity and Human Rights Advisor to discuss the situation and learn about the next steps, formal procedures, and resources available for resolving the matter. The office can provide advice on how to proceed and ensure the matter is handled in accordance with university policies.

6 Follow University Protocols

Report the issue: If the situation warrants formal investigation or action, report the incident to the relevant university authorities, such as the department chair, program coordinator, Dean, or the Diversity and Human Rights Advisor. Brandon University has formal procedures for addressing complaints of discrimination or harassment, and these procedures should be followed.

Ensure confidentiality and fairness: Any investigation or response should be conducted with confidentiality and impartiality to protect the privacy of both the student and the faculty member involved. The faculty member should not retaliate against the student or take any action that could be seen as punitive.

7 Commit to Change

Consider mediation or restorative justice: If appropriate, consider participating in a mediated conversation with the student, possibly with the help of a neutral third party, to work through the issue and find a constructive resolution. Restorative justice practices can help promote healing and understanding on both sides.

brandonu.ca/diversity/guide-to-conflict-resolution-at-bu/

Commit to ongoing learning and self-improvement: Faculty members should prove a willingness to engage in ongoing learning about "isms", inclusion, anti-oppression, trauma-informed, culturally informed and culturally safe practices to navigate these important issues. This might include reading, engaging in discussions around diversity and inclusion with colleagues and students, and/or attending professional development training.

Adjust: If it becomes clear that unintentional harm was caused, faculty members should take concrete steps to adjust their behavior, teaching methods, or approach to ensure that similar issues do not arise in the future.

8 Follow Up

Check in with the student: After addressing the situation, it may be appropriate to check in with the student to see how they are feeling and if there are further concerns. This can show a commitment to resolving the issue and ensure that the student feels heard and supported.

Monitor the situation: If the matter is not fully resolved, or if the student's concerns persist, continue to monitor the situation and stay in contact with relevant university offices to ensure the issue is appropriately addressed.



**BRANDON
UNIVERSITY**

HEALTH STUDIES

Written By: Cheryl Fleming, Princess Eze, Divina Suazo,
and Candice Waddell-Henowitch.

Thanks to the FHS EDI Committee and the broader University Community for their review and oversight. Special thanks to Jan Marie, Derrick, Catherine, Jen, Karen, Tarissa, and Akech. Design Work: Jeremy Carter
Project Supported Financially by the Anti-Racism Task Force and CTLT.

Copyright: Brandon University