

Equity & Inclusion Group Ground Rules

*Adapted from UT Astronomy E&I Discussion Group Ground Rules
by Caitlin Casey, Brandon Bozek, and Raquel Martinez.*

1. This isn't Diversity 101. Take responsibility for your own learning. This group is not intended as "Diversity 101" training. Members new to these issues are encouraged to spend time reading and listening. Remember that education is an ongoing process. It is not appropriate to demand another member educate you. Please see the [CNS](#) and [UT](#) diversity and equity pages for links to further reading and resources.

2. No tone policing. "Tone policing" involves censoring a commenter's perceived emotions or tone. Focus on content, not perceived emotion. Tone policing includes, but is not limited to, calls for restraint when members of marginalized groups communicate their hurt or anger over oppression and lived experiences; warning those members that they will alienate allies if they don't express themselves "nicely;" characterizing those members as aggressive or threatening for calling out poor behavior.

3. We all have different backgrounds and cultures; don't assume! Members should not assume their culture or nationality is shared by all others in the group or otherwise the "default" culture.

4. Do not belittle or ignore someone's lived experiences. This term refers to feminist and anti-racist theories on how women in general, but especially women of color and other underrepresented groups, are often ignored by dominant texts and discourses. A white woman has lived experience of being a woman, but a transgender woman of color has lived experience on what it's like to be a woman, a transgender individual, and a person of color. Our group welcomes underrepresented groups to share their knowledge and experiences of their culture and/or group. Having lived experience in one field (being a "woman") does not invalidate the lived experiences of members of other marginalized groups or another member of that same group. Our aim is to give these lived experiences a platform that is otherwise denied in STEM teaching, training and practice.

5. Elevate the voices of marginalized members. During a discussion of an issue affecting a marginalized group, members of that group have priority. If you are not in that group, double check yourself before commenting — will your comments be helpful?

6. Respect intersectionality (multiple -isms, e.g. Black women face both sexism and racism) and be aware of your own privilege. Just because your intent is good does not mean the impact of your words will be good or appropriate. All persons, regardless of age, sex, race, gender identity, religion, ethnicity, ability, or sexual orientation should be treated with dignity and respect. While we respect diversity, being a member of one marginalized group, or having experience along several intersecting identities, does not give any member the right to alienate, berate, belittle or otherwise antagonize other members.

7. Tokenization of an identity is not acceptable. A diversity of opinions exist within marginalized groups, including in ways that may serve the interests of majority/dominant groups. No single person speaks on

behalf of all that share their identity(ies). Assuming so violates this policy. Don't appropriate, co-opt or otherwise repurpose underrepresented voices, issues or resources to support the status quo.

8. Past "rights" don't right a wrong. Using a person in a marginalized group as a "shield" from critical thinking about inequalities will not be tolerated. This includes using past diversity/social justice activism or participation in diversity initiatives as a defense against being called out. Majority/dominant members should not exploit minorities to further their personal agendas, such as by claiming minorities are too afraid to speak up on controversial issues.

9. Respect confidentiality within the group. What is said here, stays here. What is learned here leaves here. Never share quotes or stories of what happens in the group without the express permission of all involved.

10. Apologize when appropriate. Draw on the Oops!/Ouch! Framework (below) to navigate conflict and miscommunications. When you get "called out" for being wrong or hurtful, you are expected to stop, apologize, step away, reflect, get educated, and change.

"Oops!/Ouch!" Framework: One common method used in groups like this is the Oops!/Ouch! technique for safe, productive discussion: If you say something inappropriate, own it with an "oops!", apologize without making excuses, and restate what you meant (or politely shut up). If you find a statement hurtful, you can respond with an "ouch!". If you feel comfortable, you can tell the person who said the hurtful statement why their words are offensive or inappropriate.