

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Glossary of Terms

Equity is not the same as formal equality. Formal equality implies sameness. Equity, on the other hand, assumes difference and takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome. Equity recognizes that some groups were (and are) disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and are, therefore, underrepresented or marginalized in many organizations and institutions. The effects of that exclusion often linger systemically within organizational policies, practices and procedures. Equity, therefore, means increasing diversity by ameliorating conditions of disadvantaged groups.

Diversity can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. Visible diversity is generally those attributes or characteristics that are external. However, diversity goes beyond the external to internal characteristics that we choose to define as ‘invisible’ diversity. Invisible diversity includes those characteristics and attributes that are not readily seen. When we recognize, value, and embrace diversity, we are recognizing, valuing, and embracing the uniqueness of each individual. The [ALA] Task Force has chosen to define “diversity” in all its complexity in order to recognize and honor the uniqueness of each ALA member, all members of our profession, and our very diverse communities.

Inclusion means an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization’s success.

Accessibility occurs when each person has the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services with substantially equivalent ease of use.

Explicit bias refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level. With explicit bias, individuals are aware of their prejudices and attitudes toward certain groups. Overt racism and racist comments are examples of explicit biases.

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases can be favorable or unfavorable assessments and are activated without an individual’s awareness or intentional control.

Intersectionality is the complex way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups

Liminal identity is when one does not identify as one or the other in a binary choice of identity (ex: male or female), but rather somewhere in-between.

Microaggressions are verbal or nonverbal slights, snubs, or insults, either intentional or unintentional made to members of marginalized groups, which leave their victims feeling uncomfortable or insulted.

Organizational culture refers to an organization's expectations, experiences, philosophy, as well as the values that guide member behavior. It is based on shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, and written and unwritten rules that have been developed over time.

Privilege is a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group. It is not about individuals being bad people, but it is about entire systems that favor some groups and put down others. Having one type of privilege doesn't mean you're not oppressed in other ways

Universal Design is an approach to the design of products and environments which makes them usable by all people to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation