



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

2018-02-20

Final Report

Equal Opportunities at the Department
of Peace and Conflict Research –
Student Survey

Equality Committee, Department of Peace and Conflict Research

The survey

During 2017, the Equality Committee at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research (DPCR) conducted a student survey on equal opportunity and equality work at the Department. The student survey was developed by the Equality Officer(s) and the Committee's two student representatives, and was examined by the entire Committee before being rolled out. The purpose of the survey was to gain insights into students' experiences of equal treatment and opportunities at the Department, and to identify areas for improvement which the Committee could address in future active measures. The anonymous survey was first distributed to students via email in April 2017, and a reminder was sent in October. Students had the option of taking the survey in either Swedish or English. The following report outlines the core findings of the survey responses from students at the DPCR. The first section presents an executive summary of the main findings from the ordinal scale survey responses. The second section summarizes the open-ended responses on improving equality work to suggest active measures for enhancing the Department's equality work around students in the future.

Survey summary

The survey was completed by 51 students out of 463 registered students. The survey respondents were enrolled at both the Bachelor and Master level. Each sub-section inquired about a specific theme, namely demographics, the Department, and education, all approached through an overarching equality lens. Most responses were echoed by more than one student, and lone grievances were rare.

Overall, the demographics of student respondents included more self-identified female respondents than males, with the option of "other" gender. This reflects the overall demographics of the Department. Most of the survey respondents had studied at the DPCR for more than one semester, though less than three. Respondents almost invariably reported feeling respected by DPCR staff and their fellow students, though students seem to feel slightly more respected by staff than other students. In both the English and Swedish surveys, at least one but not more than two respondents reported discrimination based on one of the following grounds: sexual orientation, language, age, gender, and ethnicity.

Most students agreed that gender equality is specifically addressed at the DPCR. Over 80 percent of respondents in both language surveys recognized that this topic was raised at lectures, in classes, and module instructions. Students generally believed that the Department at large is accessible, though a number of students reported difficulty in accessing classrooms, office spaces, and common areas. A potential reason for this may be the ongoing DPCR renovation which is (temporarily) limiting accessibility. Department renovations are expected to be fully completed by mid-2018. In terms of education, Master and Bachelor students in both language surveys felt that their experiences were not being called upon in lectures. Half of the English language survey respondents felt that lectures could be more inclusive and participatory. Interestingly, an overwhelming 90 percent of Swedish language survey respondents felt that the lectures are already fully inclusive and open for discussion, possibly because students of different backgrounds have different baselines for comparison. Course literature was also a point of agreement among all respondents. Survey results show that the majority of students recognized a discrepancy between equality ideals, and actual representation of diversity within chosen course literature and reading assignments.

Lastly, the work of the DPCR Equality Committee, and protocol related to equality issues, were a point of concern. Respondents expressed a lack of knowledge about the DPCR's equality work, as well as the appropriate contact persons for equality-related concerns.

Suggested active measures

This section presents active measures as proposed by survey respondents and the DPCR Equality Committee. The open-ended responses displayed great initiative on the part of students in proposing solutions for equality issues. Responses are categorized according to the themes of DPCR admittance, communication, and course literature.

Survey respondents recognized a need to incorporate a more diverse pool of students into DPCR courses. A suggested solution is to work with higher levels of the University to actively recruit students from under-represented areas of the world. This suggestion may be difficult to accommodate financially given that non-EU students are required to pay tuition, whereas Swedish and EU citizens do not pay course fees. It may however be possible to raise this concern with the relevant organs of the University. One should also note that there is an ongoing political debate in Sweden with regard to broadening university recruitment.

In both language surveys, some students felt the need to be better informed about equality standards in Sweden. Suggested solutions include informing all incoming international and Swedish students about the Department's Equality Plan, the Swedish Discrimination Act (including its 2017 update), and the work of the DPCR Equality Committee during the first week of class. The 2017-2018 Equality Officers, Charlotte Grech-Madin and Sebastian van Baalen, did speak to students at the Bachelor (A and C) and Master level at the start of the Fall semester 2017, with the aim of disseminating information on the core mission and role of the Committee. They carefully explained the seven grounds of discrimination in Swedish Law, and emphasized the importance of an equal learning environment free from discrimination and harassment. The role of the Committee was presented as threefold – advocacy, point of contact, and to develop active measures. More than one fifth (22 percent) of respondents filled the survey in the Spring semester of 2017, before the Equality Officers engaged in this outreach. Such outreach should be continued at the start of every academic year.

Course literature continues to be a point of desired improvement regarding more equal and diverse representation according to geographic location, gender, race, and ethnicity of the authors. Respondents and the Equality Committee student representatives suggest that the DPCR evaluates the current course literature, in terms of its level of diversity, and encourages Course Module Conveners to add more inclusive literature that provides a more comprehensive and diverse knowledge base for students.

Lastly, respondents requested more communication regarding equality work throughout the semester. Therefore, student representatives of the DPCR Equality Committee will create a pamphlet containing the mission, contact information, and current active measures of the Equality Committee. The Equality Committee will also inform Course Module Conveners as to the importance of listing the equality contact persons (i.e., the current Equality Officer(s), Director of Studies, and Head of Department) in all Course Module Guides.

Contact

For more information about the student equal opportunities survey, please contact the Department's Equality Officers Charlotte Grech-Madin (charlotte.grech-madin@pcr.uu.se) and Sebastian van Baalen (sebastian.van-baalen@pcr.uu.se).