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Final Report

Equal Opportunities at the Department of
Peace and Conflict Research – Student
Survey 2020

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The survey

During 2020, 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. This was the second time such a survey had been conducted. The student survey was originally developed in 2017, with the purpose of gaining 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. For 2020, the survey was reviewed by the entire Committee and some amendments were made before its second roll out. The anonymous survey was first distributed to students via email on 20 January, along with in-class notices and opportunities to complete the survey where possible. A final reminder was sent via email one week before the survey closed on 27 March. 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 comments and suggestions shared in the survey on improving equality work and active measures for enhancing the Department's equality work around students in the future.

Survey summary

The survey was completed by 115 students out of 424 registered students, which constituted 27% of the population and an increase from the 11% participation rate in 2017. Respondents were enrolled at both the Bachelor and Master level. Each sub-section inquired about a specific theme: namely demographics, the Department and education, with all approached through an overarching equality lens. Most responses were echoed by more than one student, and lone grievances were rare. 60% of respondents self-identified as female, 40% self-identified as male and 0% identified as other gender identities or expressions. There were more self-identified female respondents than other gender identities or expressions, which generally reflects the overall student demography at the department. The percentage of self-identified male respondents was higher than their overall student demography at the department. Most of the survey respondents had studied at the DPCR for one or three semesters.

Most respondents considered the Department an open and welcoming institution and almost invariably reported feeling respected by DPCR staff and their fellow students, although students seem to feel slightly more respected by staff than other students. Students generally considered the department as easily accessible, although a number of students reported difficulty in accessing office spaces (31%), common areas (22%) and classrooms (14%). A similar pattern was identified in the 2017 survey and is likely to be exacerbated with the department's loss of its allocated common area and lecture halls in 2021. Suggestions for facilitating access across all abilities were also raised in comments, which are elaborated on in the following section.

Generally, a low degree of discrimination was reported as having been witnessed or experienced at the department based on the grounds of ethnicity, sex, gender identity and expression, disability, religion, language, social background and political opinion. This was mainly attributed to other students, though also staff to a lesser extent.

In terms of education, students felt that lectures and seminars were inclusive and open for discussion overall. Some believed that their experiences were not being called upon in lectures, which may be a consequence of variation in the background, experience and

2020-05-27

previous education of students and staff at the Department. Nearly all students identified a gender perspective being included in their courses and equal opportunities included in course evaluations. Diversity in terms of gender was considered to be present by 77% of participants, as well as geographic and ethnic diversity to a slightly lesser extent of 66% and 61% respectively.

Lastly, most respondents considered information on the Department's equality work clear and available, although only 67% had knowledge of the appropriate contact persons for special education needs. A noticeably higher proportion of participants in the English survey did not know who to turn to compared to the Swedish survey participants. Differences in exposure to institutional knowledge and information may be one cause of this.

Suggested active measures

This section presents active measures as proposed by survey respondents and the DPCR Equality Committee in light of the survey results. The open-ended survey responses displayed great initiative on the part of students in proposing solutions for equality issues and congregated around the following four categories:

- Gender
- Diversity
- Accessibility
- Equality work awareness

Survey respondents encouraged more integration of a gender perspective throughout course content. Further training and techniques such as carrying out "pronoun rounds" and using gender-neutral language were also suggested to enhance inclusivity for all gender identities and expression.

Similar to the 2017 survey results, course literature continued to be a point of desired improvement regarding more equal and diverse representation. However, comments were mainly focused on increasing diversity according to geographic location, ethnicity and backgrounds of authors, which may reflect the active measures taken to increase gender diversity within course literature in recent years. The Equality Committee continues to encourage evaluation of 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, as well as transparency for when and why there is a lack of diversity.

Disability access was a point of concern. Respondents and the Equality Committee believe that resources such as microphones should be used as standard practice for lectures and that rooms and walkways should be maintained free of obstruction. Improving information, education and resources for teaching and general inclusivity will be measures encouraged to be taken in collaboration with the rest of the department, particularly the Director of Studies with regards to course guides, evaluations and teaching documents. When considering a broader accessibility perspective, access to common areas and to staff were also areas listed for improvement. Given the upcoming loss of an allocated DPCR common area for students, the extent to which this issue may be exacerbated in the future depends on whether and what alternative spaces can be found by the Campus management. Meanwhile, course coordinators are looking into new methods of working in order to maintain and improve student accessibility to them in spite of the loss of the student reception. Furthermore, the loss of Lecture Halls 1 and 2 also means that more lectures will likely take place at the newly-refurbished Gamla Torget 6, which is better designed and

2020-05-27

resourced to accommodate greater accessibility. Going forwards, the department will bear in mind the results of the survey while planning further activities, events and changes. One active measure being considered as a result from the survey findings is a workshop with the university support services on improving support and inclusivity for those with disabilities.

Finally, as in the 2017 survey findings, student respondents continued to request further advocacy and awareness raising on the work carried out by the Equality Committee. Suggestions included increasing visibility of the Committee through Studentportalen/Studium, social media, and the DPCR website, as well as continuing to hold lectures and workshops on issues of equality. Consequently, one active measure now being planned is creation of an Equality Committee mailbox that can be linked to the front page of Studentportalen/Studium, in order to increase visibility and improve the retention of institutional memory within the committee. Another active measure being worked on is improving the connection between students and the Equality Committee through greater information and communication with the Student Representatives.

Contact

For more information about the student equal opportunities survey, please contact the Department's Equality Officer, Marcellina Priadi (marcellina.priadi@pcr.uu.se).