

Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM) Policy Manual  
(last updated March 2020)

Student Union Building, room B107

**Hours of Operation:**

Monday to Friday  
9:00AM to 9:00PM

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## Accessibility Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) The UVSS Gender Empowerment Centre is committed to creating an accessible space and accessible events for self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming folks on campus, and advocating for issues of social justice on campus and in the community.
- 2) The Gender Empowerment Centre is committed to ensuring accessibility for all self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people.
- 3) The Gender Empowerment Centre recognizes the history of inaccessibility within the feminist movement to the needs, voices and concerns of many women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people. We also recognize the diversity of experiences of women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people within the feminist movement. We are committed to fostering an environment that is both physically and socially accessible for self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people to enter the space, organize for social change, and communicate about the realities of their lives and experiences.

### *Procedure*

- 1) The Gender Empowerment Centre will adhere to the following Access Checklist (from the DAWN Ontario Access Checklist):
  - Hosting child-friendly events;
  - Organizing the layout of the Centre to facilitate ease of movement and accessibility
  - Seek to provide resources in languages other than English when possible
  - Offering free or low cost events
  - Ensuring that all public events have sign language interpretation when requested
  - Using “accessibility” budget line item when planning finances for the Centre and events for services such as sign language interpretation, attendants, Braille translation and captioning

- Choosing locations for events that are safe and accessible, i.e. elevators, washrooms for persons with disabilities, gender neutral washrooms, large rooms for easy movement; non-slip ramps with gradual gradient, wheelchair accessible parking, lowered pay phones, reserving front row seats for deaf or hearing impaired attendees
  - Reducing and/or eliminating background noise during Collective and committee meetings whenever possible
  - Asking people in the Centre to refrain from using scented products
  - Allowing time for people with disabilities to arrange transportation and to prepare for other needs when attending events or meetings and clearly stating when events begin and end so arrangements can be made
  - Using access symbols on publicity materials if we are providing the service; as well as a line which states "Please contact us with any accessibility concerns or inquires"
  - Asking new volunteers and staff to name their accessibility needs on intake forms when they are being oriented to the Centre
  - Providing clear and visible signs in the Centre using contrasting colours and large print
  - Recognizing that some folks have disabilities that are not visible and never questioning someone who uses services such as ramps, special entrances, or elevators that are reserved for persons with disabilities.
- 2) Volunteers, staff and the Collective are responsible for creating an accessible space; however, we also welcome any input or feedback from folks who have specific needs which have not been addressed in this policy.

## Anti-Oppression Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) As an advocacy group under the UVSS, where the UVSS is understood to be a political organization that enforces policies in accordance with this status; and as per the Gender Empowerment Centre's mission and vision statements which indicate its individual status as a political organization, we herein adopt and will adhere to the principles listed below:
  - a) We are opposed to sexism, racism, colonialism, classism, ableism, fatphobia, ageism, heterosexism, cissexism, transphobia/transantagonism, and all other systems of oppression that result in the marginalization of individuals/groups.

### *Procedure*

- 1) The status of the Diversity Policy is herein recognised to be that of a so-called "umbrella policy," whereby all policies, actions, involvements, or other facets of the Gender Empowerment Centre are in accordance with that which is adopted in this policy.

## Confidentiality Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) The Gender Empowerment Centre recognizes the significance and importance of confidentiality. As Collective members, volunteers, and/or staff, each person that is privy to confidential issues is expected to respect the privileged and confidential nature of the communication between participants.
- 2) Information of a confidential nature may surface in Collective meetings, committee meetings, interview sessions, telephone conversations, email messages, or in personal conversations. Examples of such information include but are not limited to; personnel discussions that involve performance reviews or disciplinary actions, and decisions involving the Collective's relationship with other constituency groups or organisations in which financial or Personnel issues are on the table.

### *Procedure*

- 1) Should a Collective member at any point identify an issue as confidential, they may declare so at or before the meeting in order that the proper measures be taken to ensure confidentiality (i.e. temporarily closing the Centre to non-Collective members, moving the meeting elsewhere, etc.).
- 2) A closed meeting must be held if agenda items are categorized as confidential.<sup>1</sup>
- 3) Minutes will be kept via a word document and saved onto the GEM computer. These minutes will be made available to Collective members only. They will not be posted on the website.
- 4) All issues discussed and decisions reached in a closed meeting must not be discussed outside of this setting, except among Collective members in confidentiality with one another. If a member has unresolved feelings or

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<sup>1</sup> Only Collective members will be present for closed meetings and the Centre door should be closed.

issues that need to be discussed further, they may be reopened at subsequent closed meetings.

- 5) In the case that an outside facilitator is needed, they must be aware of the confidentiality policy and agree to it.

## Conflict of Interest Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) A conflict of interest exists when a collective member is also the member of another group or organization which will be effected in any way by the decision on the table.

### *Procedure*

- 1) The collective member must identify themselves as a member of the group or organization with a vested interest in the decision on the table.
- 2) They must identify their organization's interest in the issue at hand when speaking.
- 3) They may participate in discussion on the issue.
- 4) They must abstain from all decision making round.
  - a) If deemed appropriate by the coordinator and/or meeting facilitator and/or GEM collective, the collective member may be asked to step outside the room while a decision is being made.



## Donations Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) The UVSS Gender Empowerment Centre will fund projects by and for self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming folks, especially those which address the problems faced by marginalized members of these communities. The Gender Empowerment Centre will not donate to any organization, individual, event, service, or otherwise endorse anything that is contradictory to our Policies.
- 2) Any organization, individual, event, or service which requests a donation or endorsement from the Gender Empowerment Centre, or that the GEM is considering donating to or endorsing will be reviewed by the GEM Collective. During this time the Collective members will reach a decision on whether or not the receiver of the donation or endorsement is in accordance with Section (1) of the Donations Policy.
- 3) Our funding priorities include:
  - a) Projects that will attempt to address injustices such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism and other forms of oppression.
  - b) Projects that contribute to long term benefits for the cause.
  - c) Projects where the coordinators have made efforts to seek funding from other organisations as well.
- 4) Further to Section (3), the projects we fund will be prioritized according to the following:
  - a) Projects that are being actively pursued by a Gender Empowerment Centre Collective member, especially those that are geared toward areas in which the GEM needs more development.
  - b) Projects that are being co-sponsored by other UVSS Advocacy groups.
  - c) Projects that are UVic-centered. If a project is not UVic-centered, then priority will be given to one focused on the local community.

## *Procedure*

- 1) When deciding how much money will be allocated to the individual project we will keep in mind our budgeted amount for the year, taking note of the percentage that a single donation will take up.
  - a) This available resource shall be posted to the GEM and UVSS website to ensure that folk who are not a part of the Gender Empowerment Centre or collective can request access to such resources.
  - b) Donation requests from external organisations will be evaluated by the Collective on a case-by-case basis.
- 2) a) Any individual/organization requesting funds are required to make a brief presentation either in writing or in person, and be available to answer questions either in person or by other means before a decision is made. The GEM Coordinator will correspond with funding applicants and ensure that funding proposals include the following information:
  - A short description of the event/project funds are requested for and its relation to UVic and/or the local Victoria community
  - The amount of money being requested
  - A budget breakdown, including other sources of funding (both approached and secured) and a description of how the requested funds will be used
  - Any other information the applicant(s) would like the GEM Collective to consider
- c) Funding proposals that do not include the information laid out in Section 2(a) will not be considered.
- d) The applicant and all other interested parties are not permitted to participate or witness in any way the decision making process to avoid a conflict of interest.
- e) Funding proposals will be discussed at the next scheduled collective meeting after receiving their full proposal. Groups should expect to be contacted no later than 2 business days after said Collective Meeting, unless special circumstances have been specified by the Collective.

- f) Where applicable, individual recipients of a donation are to be requested to provide a workshop, debriefing or other form of presentation to the Collective based on the education and/or information gathered as a result of the donation.
  - e) This policy should be communicated to the applicant.
- 3) The GEM Coordinator(s) and/or a collective member who sits on the finance committee will be responsible to ensure that we do not donate more money than what has been budgeted for as well as have updated budget available at all Collective meetings.

## Finance Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) The UVSS provides the UVSS Gender Empowerment Centre with banking, payroll and accounting services in addition to year end financial statements at no cost to the Gender Empowerment Centre.
- 2) Monthly financial updates can be requested from the Accounting Office. Financial transactions are coded by account number, according to the expense or revenue. The UVSS Gender Empowerment Centre is responsible to keep track of our own finances and financial records in case there is any incongruency between our and the bookkeepers records.

### *Procedure*

- 1) Every time the Gender Empowerment Centre makes a financial transaction it must be marked in a yearly finance spreadsheet, including the date, account code, purpose, and amount.
- 2) Monthly financial updates from bookkeepers are reviewed by the coordinator and finance committee. Data is entered into finance spreadsheet.
- 3) Any possible mistake or incongruency between ourselves and the bookkeepers is entered as unexplained, and is investigated by the finance committee and/or GEM Coordinator.

## Gender Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) Within the UVSS Gender Empowerment Centre, the space is open to:
  - a) Anyone who self identifies as a woman, non-binary, or gender nonconforming;
    - i) Both non-binary and gender nonconforming can serve as individual identities as well as umbrella terms for a plethora of identities people adopt that exist outside of the gender binary. These identities include (but are not limited to): genderqueer, genderfluid, two spirit, agender. GEM is inclusive of all people who identify within these general umbrellas.

### *Procedure*

- 1) This policy will be enforced by and large by the "honour system," whereby any individual who wishes to utilize the lounge space and/or services of the Gender Empowerment Centre is invited to do so only if they identify as outlined in Section 1 of the policy.
- 2) A sign will remain inside and outside of the Gender Empowerment Centre in plain sight summing up the Gender Empowerment Centre's Gender Policy and how this applies to who can and cannot utilize its space and services.
- 3) GEM resources (including pregnancy tests, menstrual supplies, and safer sex supplies) will be made available to students and community members of all identities, by making menstrual and safer sex supplies available outside of the GEM Lounge and other resources accessible by request via email or in the UVSS General Office.

## Hiring Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) The Gender Empowerment Centre is committed to entering into hiring procedures that reflect intersectional feminist processes.
- 2) We recognize the marginalisation of many groups of women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people and are therefore committed to employment equity.

### *Procedure*

- 1) Hiring procedures shall conform to the University of Victoria Students' Society's hiring policies and procedures. UVSS policies will be followed if there is a conflict between UVSS and GEM hiring policies.
- 2) When hiring a Coordinator, the hiring committee must include a minimum of two and a maximum of three Gender Empowerment Centre Collective members who sit on the Personnel Committee, as well as a self-identified woman, non-binary, or gender nonconforming member of the UVSS Board of Directors and a union representative. At the discretion of the Collective, the Coordinator may be on the hiring committee.
- 3) A person shall not be hired without an interview, unless the applicant is internal, meets all qualifications and requirements, and the hiring committee has reached consensus in their decision to hire this applicant.
- 4) The Hiring Committee shall use a consensus decision-making model.
- 5) A Hiring Committee shall be struck for all positions, although the composition may not always be the same. For example, work-study positions do not require a member of the Board of Directors or a union representative on the hiring committee. However, on hiring committees for a work-study position, at least one Collective member must be present, along with the Coordinator.

- 6) When resumes are received, they are treated as confidential material to be viewed by and discussed amongst Hiring Committee members only.
- 7) After the hiring process is completed, all resumes are to be kept on file for six months upon which time they are to be destroyed.
- 8) Priority will be given to self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming folks from marginalized groups.
- 9) In posting and recruiting for a position, the Hiring Committee shall ensure that the posting is accessible to a wide group of people. This may involve contacting and advertising in non-mainstream venues, including but not limited to spaces that cater to queer and trans folks, people of colour, and folks with disabilities.
- 10) The Gender Empowerment Centre reserves the right to post staff positions open to self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming folks only *in Accordance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Article 15.2.*

## Library and Archives Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) The purpose of the Gender Empowerment Centre Library (hereafter referred to as the Library) is to provide feminist material, with a focus on literature that is focused on and produced by women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming folks, and to provide this material to self-identified women, non-binary, and gender non-conforming folks accessing the Gender Empowerment Centre, as well as other individuals on campus and from the community.
- 2) The Library's primary goal is to carry material that is not otherwise available on campus or that is difficult to find. The Gender Empowerment Centre shall strive to make the Library and the materials contained in it as accessible as possible to people with a wide range of abilities, and a diversity of interests and perspectives.
- 3) Unlike the Gender Empowerment Centre lounge and office areas, the Library is gender-inclusive space.
- 4) The Gender Empowerment Centre's Library Committee should always be active. If there are no volunteers willing to keep this committee active, the duties of maintaining the library's basic operations shall fall to the Gender Empowerment Centre Coordinator or another staff member.

### *Procedure*

- 1) Those volunteers or staff members who are performing the operations of the Library shall be responsible for these operations, including but not limited to shelving, filing and sorting new and existing materials, and checking in materials that have been returned. In addition, they shall be responsible for contacting people who have overdue materials.
- 2) The cataloguing and filing systems shall be kept as up to date and as accessible as possible.



- 3) Before checking material out from the Library, patrons must fill out the library check out form, including their name, phone number and/or email address, the material's title and author, and the date.
- 4) The loan period is three weeks. After the loan period has passed, patrons will be contacted until the material has been returned.
- 5) A drop box for returned material shall sit at all time in the Gender Empowerment Centre library.
- 6) The Gender Empowerment Centre's budget shall keep a budget line item for the Library. The priority for spending this money is on material that the library is lacking. Input from individuals using the Gender Empowerment Centre and/or library is the primary way to get feedback as to what types of materials are most needed.

## Policy Formation

### *Policy*

- 1) The Gender Empowerment Centre's policies are not "written in stone" and can be changed to fit the needs of its Collective.
- 2) The Gender Empowerment Centre is committed to keeping its policy initiation, development and amendment processes transparent.
- 3) Having written policies in accessible locations makes the processes and operations of the Gender Empowerment Centre more transparent and open to volunteers and the general community. Policies shall be made available via the website.

### *Procedure*

- 1) Initiation of the policy development and/or amendment process can be made by individual Collective members, the Collective as a whole, or Gender Empowerment Centre staff members or committees.
- 2) a) Notice of agenda items related to policy amendments or adoption must be served one week prior to the Collective meeting at which the agenda item is being discussed. This includes an announcement at the prior Collective meeting and email notification.  
  
b) If possible, email notices should have the draft policy attached.
- 3) All policies must be passed by the Collective.
- 4) Any self-identified woman, non-binary, or gender nonconforming constituent of the Gender Empowerment Centre can join the Organization and Development Committee and attend its meetings. Likewise, the Collective and its meetings also operate on an "open door" policy.
- 5) All policies should be reviewed annually to ensure that they are still applicable and serving the needs of the Gender Empowerment Centre.

## Referral Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) Although we offer a diverse spectrum of services to UVic campus self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming folks, the Gender Empowerment Centre does not offer a number of services that some people may require. In particular, we do not employ a trained counsellor. Instances will arise when assistance is required that is beyond our sphere of knowledge and/or mandate. It is here that we can take advantage of other services in our network, including those on campus and those in the community, so we can refer people to the relevant organisations that offer whatever service is needed.

### *Procedure*

- 1) The Gender Empowerment Centre shall keep a thorough and up to date collection of resources in the office of a variety of services, societies and organisations that might be of use to our constituents. For example, medical services, shelters, other Women's Centres/advocacy groups, childcare services, legal services, etc. are all relevant categories that should be covered.
- 2) In addition to the collection of resources in the office, there are various resource books in the office and lounge that together offer a comprehensive listing of agencies for services ranging from abortion to violence-related acts. These are also helpful tools to consult when trying to ensure that people have access to the help they need.
- 3) If a request for help is unable to be met by the Gender Empowerment Centre due to lack of information on our part, the necessary steps should be taken to ensure that this does not happen again and that whatever information we are lacking is gathered.

## Reproductive Freedom and Health Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) The self-identified women, non-binary, or gender nonconforming recognizes a person's right to reproductive freedom, wherein a people are entitled to control over their own body, including but not limited to matters pertaining to reproduction. Therefore, we are a "pro-choice" organization.
- 2) Every person should have safe and equal access to the appropriate health care services of their choice.

### *Procedure*

- 1) The Gender Empowerment Centre will have resources available regarding reproductive health, including but not limited to information on abortion services and counselling.
  - a) The Gender Empowerment Centre is committed to advocating for reproductive freedom on campus and in the community; this included but is not limited to providing education and support to individuals/groups.
- 3) The Gender Empowerment Centre will have updated and accessible information on a wide variety of health care services and providers.

## Space Policy

### *Policy*

- 1) The Gender Empowerment Centre is a place exclusively reserved for the use and occupancy of self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people. All self-identified women, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people are welcome (please refer to the Gender Policy), as we encourage a safe, respectful environment for all of these groups.
- 2) The following are exceptions to Section (1) for persons who do not identify as women, non-binary, or gender nonconforming:
  - a) All genders are welcome in the library at all times.
  - b) With respect to groups or events sponsored by the Gender Empowerment Centre or with an affiliated organization that include all genders, the lounge can be used as long as consensus on the matter has been reached by the collective.
  - c) Service providers of all genders can enter the space on the basis of necessity.
  - d) If someone comes to the Centre seeking information from within the office, it is within the Coordinator's discretion (or that of a long term Collective member) to allow them in for a brief period while realising and making efforts to accommodate the sensitivities of any other people in the space.

### *Procedure*

- 1) When non-self-identified women, non-binary, or gender nonconforming service providers enter the space, people within the Centre are to be informed beforehand. While they are in the office, the door is to be closed.
- 2) Visible signs must be displayed outside and inside of the Centre indicating we are a space for self-identified women, non-binary, or gender nonconforming. Non-self-identified women, non-binary, or gender nonconforming people are

asked to knock for service, and are to be met in the hallway, library, or other area whenever possible.

- 3) No one is permitted to ask a person's gender under any circumstances.
- 4) This policy is to be outlined to new volunteers and Collective members during volunteer orientations.