Understanding Discrimination

Definition

**Discrimination** is any action that excludes, isolates, imposes differential treatment, or deprives someone of rights based on one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination. Discrimination places burdens, obligations or disadvantages on an individual or group not inflicted upon others, or it withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits, and advantages available to other members of society. This deprives targeted individuals of their right to the equal recognition and exercise of their human rights and freedoms.

Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination

The prohibited grounds of discrimination are enumerated in s. 10 of the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and include:

**Age** Applies to any age or age group except as provided by law. Examples of age-based distinctions that are not discriminatory include restricting the right to vote to persons 18 years or older, or basing insurance premiums on age, among other factors.

**Social condition** The specific place or position that a person occupies in society that reflects that person’s income, occupation or education.

**Political convictions** Include beliefs expressed by open support of a political ideology, activism on behalf of a political party or social lobby group, or participation in the activities of a trade union.

**Civil status** Relates to your family situation, for example, whether a person is single, married, divorced, widowed, adopted, or has any form of family ties or kinship.

**Pregnancy** A person’s state of pregnancy.

**Disability** An actual or presumed disadvantage that limits one physically, mentally, or psychologically. This ground also refers to the means used to palliate a disability such as a wheelchair, guide dog, or prosthesis.

**Language** Any language, including an accent. The status of French as Quebec’s official language is not in itself discriminatory.

**Sexual orientation** A person’s emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to individuals of a particular gender. The law prohibits discrimination based on the history of a sexual preference, current sexual preference or identification with having such a preference.

**Sex:** An individual’s female, male, transgender or transsexual gender identity.

**Race, colour, ethnic or national origin** An individual’s actual or perceived country of origin; membership in a group in society with distinctive social or cultural traits; skin colour.

**Religion** An individual’s membership or non-membership in a religious denomination. This prohibited ground of discrimination also includes religious practices as well as the right to not be treated differently if you do not belong to any religious denomination or if you do not have any religious beliefs.

Resources

**McGill Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited by Law**

**McGill Assessors** Assessors are members of the McGill Community that investigate complaints under the Policy by any member of the McGill Community that feels that they have been harassed or discriminated against. 

Contact information.

**Student Advocacy** The Student Advocacy Program is part of the Legal Information Clinic at McGill. It provides free and confidential advice and representation in cases where McGill students are going through disciplinary, grievance or appeals processes. Visit the website or call (514) 398-4384.

**Office for Students with Disabilities** Provides services and support for students with disabilities. Visit the website or call (514) 398-6009.

**First Peoples’ House** A McGill Student Service mandated to support First Nations students. Visit the website or call (514) 398-3217

**Queer McGill** A SSMU service that runs social, activist, and support activities for the queer community at McGill. Visit the website.

**Black Students’ Network** A SSMU service dedicated to issues in the Black Community. Visit the website or call (514) 398-3001 x 09974

**Union for Gender Empowerment** A SSMU service that aims to provide services to any person who identifies with anti-oppressive and trans-inclusive principles, regardless of gender identity. Visit the website or call: (514) 398-6823

**Quebec Human Rights Commission Website**