

Safe Space Policy Version 1.0

Active U

General

What is a safe space? A safe and accessible space where an individual is encouraged to express themselves without fear of violence, harassment, intimidation, bullying or microaggressions.

In a safe space, there is not a particular ideology that must be held or adhered to; rather it is about respect for all who share the space. The use of violence, harassment, insults or intimidation, even in the name of “free speech”, “free expression” or “debate”, will not be tolerated. Safe spaces are not about trying to suppress or forbid conflict, rather they are concerned with allowing it to happen constructively, while ensuring that it doesn’t lead to people getting hurt, marginalized or silenced.

Why is a safe space necessary? Dominant ideologies and beliefs prevail that lead to the systemic discrimination of individuals whose membership in particular groups within society results in marginalization.

Example 1: A marginalized individual may be approached and questioned about their sexuality. The individual is there, at the event, meeting or space, simply to participate and enjoy themselves – they should be able to enjoy the space, free from that they may be confronted, insulted or otherwise attacked.

Example 2: At a meeting, the concerns or perspectives of a marginalized individual may not be taken seriously or given equal credence to those who have more privilege (e.g. class, race, ability, age, etc.). The views of someone who possesses more privilege are often treated as orthodoxy – true, correct, the right way. The problem becomes exacerbated when marginalized individuals are often afraid to challenge the views of those with privilege. This cycle replicates the dominant hegemonic conditions that perpetuate marginalization, alienation, apathy and non-participation.

It is important to cultivate an environment where all are free to express their opinions and treated equally.

The Safe Space Policy outlines conduct for behaviour, actions and interactions within the Organization. The following policy guidelines are to be adhered to at all times with regards to, but not limited to, personal conduct within the space, any meetings, any materials circulated within our spaces, and at any events or programming taking place within our spaces or in conjunction with the Organization.

The Safe Space Policy aims to establish the Active U as a safe, comfortable and inclusive environment for every individual within the space regardless of sex, gender, race, or class. This means constructively confronting and stopping oppressive behaviour and language. Discrimination and oppression based on any of the following is absolutely not tolerated:

race or culture

sexual or romantic orientation

gender or gender identity

age

(dis)ability or accessibility needs

economic/social class

religion

any other identity markers

Policy

The Active U recognizes that the dynamics of hierarchy, power and privilege that exist within society are also found within the social

environment on campus. We believe that failing to address these dynamics alienates and further victimizes our members and stops us from creating the equitable world we want.

Members of the Active U and those using the space are asked to be aware of their language and behaviour, and to think about whether it might be oppressive to others. While we do not wish to promote a culture of excessive political correctness or the absence of humour, we recognize that oppression is in the eye of the beholder and ask members to respectfully consider the feelings and perspectives of those they interact with.

The Active U is absolutely no space for violence, racism, ageism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, sizeism, sleaziness, or touching another person without consent.

Acting in a way that perpetuates oppression, including through language, is not acceptable.

Definitions

“Microaggression” is defined as a small act of non-physical aggression based on bias and stereotypes. Microaggressions are the negative assumptions about people that limit their humanity and value.

“Oppressive Behaviour” is defined as behaviour as any conduct that demeans, marginalizes, rejects, threatens or harms anyone on the basis of ability, activist experience, age, cultural background, education, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, language, nationality, physical appearance, race, religion, self-expression, sexual orientation, status as a parent or other such factors.

Oppressive behaviour occurs every day, often in seemingly trivial ways. For example, interruptions, jokes, and oppressive language are common behaviours that reinforce power dynamics. Over time, such behaviours can

develop into a pattern of oppression that is far more damaging than an isolated incident.

“Privilege” is defined as the material, psychological and convenience advantages given to individuals who are members of particular groups (e.g. race, gender, social status, sexuality, etc.).

Procedure

There are specific situations in which the Active U and its representatives must be especially sensitive to the guidelines of the Safe Space Policy. These circumstances include, but are not limited to:

a) Meetings

The meetings must be a safe space for all attendees to ensure equal participation without intimidation or segregation. The Active U strives to keep our meetings a positive, welcoming and inclusive environment.

b) Events and Programs

The events and programs held within or in conjunction with The Active U must adhere to the Safe Space policy and whenever possible promote an inclusive and safe environment for students and members. The nature of events can become unsafe and exclusive for students in many ways (music, activity, themes, etc.) and such events contradict the mission and values that guide all The Active U activities.

c) Promotional Material

Any promotional material for The Active U or left with the The Active U on behalf of student groups should adhere to the Safe Space Policy.

Individual staff, members and volunteers are asked to please keep the following in mind while interacting with others, hosting an event or promoting materials:

- Respect everyone's physical and emotional boundaries. Ask first before touching, and listen and change your behavior if someone tells you that you are making them uncomfortable.
- Check in before discussing topics that might be triggering (e.g. sexual abuse, sexual experiences, physical violence, or encounters with the police).
- Be responsible for your own actions. Be aware that your actions have an effect on others despite what your intentions may be.
- If you are called out for problematic behaviour, do not be defensive. Your intentions and character are not under attack, it is only the behaviour that is being challenged. Be open to understanding the role your behaviour has in other people's experiences of oppression.
- Respect the pronouns and names of everyone. Do not assume anyone's gender identity, sexual preference, survivor status, economic status, background, health, etc.
- Respect people's opinions, beliefs, experiences and differing points of view.

The Active U will take the following steps to implement the Safe Space Policy:

- All Active U directors, employees, users and volunteers will be informed of this policy through signs posted at our locations and all new employees and volunteer will be notified of this policy during volunteer orientations and/or new staff training.