**Terms of Reference - Employee Disability Community Network**

This Terms of Reference is created by the Office of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility, advised by members of the Employee Disability Community Network.

# **1. Background**

The Employee Disability Community Network (EDCN) is part of the Disability Affinity Program, led by the Associate Director, Campus Accessibility, and the Disability Inclusion Coordinator (the Campus Accessibility team) within the Office of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility, herein referred to as EDCN leads.

# **2. Purpose**

The primary goal of the Employee Disability Community Network (EDCN) is to create meaningful space for mentorship, peer support, and knowledge exchange within the employee disability community at the University of Waterloo as it pertains to navigating disability- and neurodivergence-related experiences in the workplace. By fostering an inclusive community network, the EDCN contributes to the University’s broader equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts per the [Provost’s Advisory Committee on Building a Resilient University of Waterloo](https://uwaterloo.ca/provost/reports/provosts-advisory-committee-building-resilient-university) and the [Waterloo at 100](https://uwaterloo.ca/waterloo-100/) Strategic plan. The EDCN will also support the University in meeting its institutional commitments and legislative requirements for consultation by nurturing an engaged community to invite participants for community engagement opportunities. Legislative requirements include those listed in the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11) (2005) and the [AODA Postsecondary Education Standards recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/page/development-proposed-postsecondary-education-standards-final-recommendations-report-2022) (2022).

The primary goal of the EDCN is community building and support related to navigating personal experiences of disability and neurodivergence in the workplace. The EDCN does not provide educational workshops or activities to other campus partners or external groups. Should the EDCN members reach consensus for a desire to conduct these activities, the EDCN leads will determine which existing institutional pathways are most relevant and how these can be accessed.

# **3. Objectives**

* Collaboratively build a space for EDCN members to share experiences, challenges, and best practices with other community members related to personal experiences of disability and neurodivergence in the workplace.
* Support participant engagement for institutional consultation on the advancement of campus accessibility and disability inclusion.
* Act as a consultative body on institutional policies and practices upon request by campus partners and deemed appropriate and necessary by EDCN leads.
* Promote awareness on institutional feedback pathways and support mechanisms relevant to navigating personal experiences of disability and neurodivergence in the workplace

# **4. Membership**

Membership is open to all employees, inclusive of active staff and faculty, of the University of Waterloo who self-identify with current lived experience of disability or neurodivergence.

The EDCN is built on the values of honoring lived experiences as expertise and the power of listening to this expertise to guide continuous evaluation. The EDCN further recognizes the sensitive nature of disclosing disability. In these ways, the EDCN supports participants in determining their own eligibility and choosing for themselves when and how to disclose personal information.

Participation is voluntary, and employees may join or leave the email mailing list or attend EDCN meetings at their discretion.

# **5. Structure and Governance**

The Executive Sponsor for the EDCN is the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility. The Program Manager is the Associate Director, Campus Accessibility. The EDCN leads are the Associate Director, Campus Accessibility and the Disability Inclusion Coordinator.

The EDCN leads are responsible for setting and upholding the mandate/scope of the network, finalizing discussion topics, facilitating discussions, and coordinating meetings.

Ideas on meeting activities and discussion topics will be generated via discussions at meetings, facilitated by the EDCN leads.

Members are encouraged to provide input through regular meetings and feedback mechanisms, including a standing feedback form promoted through the email mailing list.

# **6. Meetings and Communication**

Regular community meetings will be held not more than monthly. Decisions regarding in-person or virtual meeting settings will be determined by members at least one month in advance and communicated via the email mailing list.

Anonymized notes will be documented and shared with members through a standing Shared Notetaking Document for the purposes of reviewing community knowledge shared in the meeting, including recommended books and videos for further learning, suggestions for peer support, or topic request for future meetings. Notes are taken by the EDCN Leads to ensure that EDCN engagement guidelines are maintained and that no names are recorded.

Guest presentations by non-members may occur during EDCN meetings, as coordinated by the EDCN leads and upon agreement of EDCN members to ensure members’ emotional safety, well-being, and confidentiality.

Communication will occur only through the email mailing list that employees can elect to join or leave. This mailing list will only ever be accessed by the EDCN leads (the Office of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility) to protect the confidentiality of members. Communication is one-way and members cannot contact other members through the mailing list.

One meeting a year of the EDCN may occur simultaneously with the Student Disability Community Network as a joint meeting to support mentorship and networking opportunities, upon approval by members of both Networks and the EDCN leads.

# **7. Anti-Oppressive Framework**

The EDCN aims to continually develop in alignment with anti-oppressive frameworks that center intersectional equity and employee voices. Should members from the EDCN or the EDCN leads feel that the EDCN has stepped away from these frameworks, the EDCN leads will discuss and reassess the program alignment and opportunities for meaningful action.

# **8. Engagement Guidelines**

***Meeting Coordination***

The EDCN leads will manage all administrative activities, including room booking, supply procurement, and resource requests.

***Meeting Facilitation***

The Disability Inclusion Coordinator will be the primary facilitator of all EDCN meetings. While the Disability Inclusion Coordinator may identify with and express shared lived experiences, this is not a requirement for facilitation. Instead, principles of trauma-informed care and an anti-oppressive lens will guide facilitation. Should the Disability Inclusion Coordinator be unable to facilitate a scheduled meeting, other members from the Office of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility may support facilitation. All facilitators will have knowledge and understanding of the EDCN Terms of Reference and uphold these principles as part of their employment with the University.

As a representative of the University and EDCN lead, the EDCN facilitator is responsible for ensuring all meeting discussions are in alignment with the EDCN purpose and institutional values, policies, and procedures. As such, the EDCN facilitator will end or redirect discussions that are harmful, breaches confidentiality, is inappropriate for the EDCN, or is best held in other institutional spaces. To uphold this responsibility, the EDCN facilitator may need to remove an individual from the network if these aspects are compromised.

***Feedback Pathways***

The EDCN does not have a mandate to oversee or direct response to formal institutional feedback or incidents of ableism or other forms of identity-based harms. To ensure that EDCN activities align with organizational policies and to protect the anonymity of members, all feedback, recommendations, or concerns raised by EDCN members will be considered by the EDCN leads and directed through established channels as appropriate and necessary. EDCN leads may facilitate appropriate feedback pathways/mechanisms with individual members on their specific, individual concerns.

***Scope of Engagement***

The EDCN does not function as a decision-making or advocacy body, but instead as a supportive community group related to personal experiences of disability and neurodivergence in the workplace.

EDCN activities must align with organizational values and policies and the stated scope of the network.

The EDCN values confidentiality, respect, and inclusivity in all engagements. Members will not discuss confidential organizational matters inside or outside of meetings, such as specific interactions with colleagues, managers, or others. Confidentiality may not be guaranteed should a member disclose harm to self, others, or members of the EDCN. The University has a responsibility to uphold its statutory obligations, such as the Ontario Human Rights Code, AODA, and Occupational Health and Safety Act.

As a University of Waterloo sanctioned network, all members of the EDCN are bound by applicable University policies and processes. Violations, concerns, and dispute resolutions will follow applicable University processes.

# **9. Evaluation and Sustainability**

The EDCN was developed under advisement of employee community engagement to ensure employee wants and needs related to disability community networks were reflected in the Network. Employees continue to be integral partners in the EDCN. Feedback will be collected and evaluated via what is noted below, with room to add and adapt responsively:

* Continual development of the group guidelines in the first EDCN meeting of each semester
* Open feedback form linked to the bottom of EDCN mailing list emails
* Annual member surveys and organizational feedback

The Disability Inclusion Coordinator will document key metrics and feedback related to attendance, meeting accessibility, and progress towards the goals outlined in this Terms of Reference to inform future initiatives.

# **10. Amendments**

This Terms of Reference document will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Any proposed amendments must be approved by the Associate Director, Campus Accessibility and submitted to the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility for final review.

# **11. Acknowledgment**

By participating in the EDCN, members agree to uphold the principles outlined in this Terms of Reference and contribute to a respectful, inclusive, and constructive environment.

# **Revision History**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Change Made By | Date Change Made | Details of Change | Change Reviewed/ Approved by | Date change reviewed/ approved |
| Samantha Fowler | March 3, 2025 | Initial Draft |  |  |
| Joyce Barlow | March 5, 2025 | Edits and comments |  |  |
| Samantha Fowler | April 4, 2025 | Draft 2 |  |  |
| Joye Barlow | April 11, 2025 | Editorial changes made |  |  |
| Samantha Fowler | April 30, 2025 | Draft 3 |  |  |
| Joyce Barlow | May 12, 2025 | Draft 3 reviewed |  |  |
| Samantha Fowler | May 29, 2025 | Final draft |  |  |