

Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Philosophy and Concrete Practices

Born as a second-generation refugee in U.A.E., and then as a Muslim moving to the U.S. at the age of twelve just before September 11th, followed by moving to Canada as a political refugee at the age of thirteen has shaped my worldview in profound ways. I understand and appreciate the struggle of relocating and learning a new language, a struggle for a significant percentage of international students. The appreciation of diversity in Canada enabled me to thrive and avail the many opportunities I received to pursue higher studies and research. My academic pursuits and social interactions have taught me the importance of facilitating the journeys of marginalized and racialized groups, particularly in higher education. In addition, I recognize that other's struggles can be vastly different from my own.

The aims towards equity, diversity and inclusion as advertised on the UOttawa website strongly resonates with me. My experience in Canada has helped me recognize the value of bringing multiple perspectives together to draw the best out of them. In my classrooms and research group I aim to emulate these values. I look forward to hosting students and collaborate with researchers and peers from diverse backgrounds, including race, gender, age, physical disabilities, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, I will maintain collaborations and academic exchanges with groups in Japan, Europe, and North America, which will help my students engage with world-class research while being exposed to other cultures.

Having lived, studied, and worked in various countries with diverse socio-political and cultural norms, I am fully convinced that equity and inclusiveness allow creativity to flourish, and it also leads to social cohesion in diverse societies. Ultimately, this builds of a society where knowledge generation open our minds and hearts to the challenges facing societies and individuals. I am also acutely aware of the challenges that the absence of these values can cause. Discrimination in the pursuit of education and research alienates racialized and marginalized groups and impoverishes society as a whole. Discriminatory practices hollows the value of education and research from within and inevitably leaves its entire community vulnerable and lacking sustainability.

I enjoyed working with people having different training and expertise backgrounds, and engaging with students from different cultures around the globe. Recently, I have been working with students coming through the Quantum Pathways program at UBC, which gives undergraduate students from minority groups the opportunity to do research at our institute. This has been a great reminder of the duty we all share in supporting the next generation of researchers. I met with the students on a weekly basis for about an hour teaching them ideas about crystallographic symmetry and X-ray diffraction. By nurturing a diverse body of academics at each institute, we can help young students overcome the mental barriers for engaging with an academic career. My former Quantum Pathways student is now pursuing a PhD in the US. Beyond mentoring many students that crossed my academic path, I reached out to Muslims Achieving Excellence program in Canada. This program gave me the opportunity to mentor students, mostly from ethnic minority groups, interested in STEM. I hope to collaborate with and promote existing diversity programs at UOttawa.

I have been fortunate in my academic growth in that I have not been made to feel that I received any special treatment from anyone along the way, but rather made to feel that I belong in academia. I am also cognizant of the fact that many members of disenfranchised groups around the world do not have such opportunities. This gives me a strong sense of duty to repay the global society for the opportunities I have received throughout my life. My individual success also belongs to those who helped me along the way and those who will help me going forward. I aim to provide the same opportunities to those who will cross my path, enter my classes, conduct research with me, and colleagues and staff who share the workplace with me at UOttawa. As a prospective faculty member at UOttawa, I feel strongly about nurturing students from varied backgrounds, sharpen their research skills, and build up their confidence to help them achieve their goals in research and beyond.