

MUDS Equity Policy

What is Equity?

Equity is the fundamental belief that all individual are equal. More pertinently to MUDS, we believe that equity is one's ability to be an equal member of our community, and to feel both safe and respected at all times. What that means is that nobody should be denied access to any element of our society, or be made to feel as if they are lesser or unwanted, on the basis on some facet of themselves that they cannot change, for example their gender, race or sexuality, or for any of their views or beliefs. Equally, nobody should be made to feel uncomfortable as a result of such aforementioned immutable elements. However, equity can also be considered to constitute your right to just generally feeling comfortable in you environment.

The Welfare and equity Goals of the Society

The Melbourne University Debating Society seeks to protect the welfare of all its members and all those with whom it interacts within societal activities, where:

- Welfare is defined as the physical and mental wellbeing of an individual.
- An environment that positively supports the welfare of its members is one that is free from discrimination, harassment and one that provides a comfortable space in which all members can belong.
- A positive environment responsibly manages risks to welfare including, but not limited to, the consumption of alcohol.
- Societal activities are defined as official societal events including training and weekly debates, tournaments and official social events, and those events preceding and following societal

What Constitutes an Equity Violation?

At MUDS, if you feel as though your equity has been violated, or that you are either unsafe or unwelcome, that is something we take seriously.

An equity violation can be something like an inappropriate comment of a sexual nature, a racially inappropriate joke, or something that makes you feel as though you have been diminished in some way because of something you cannot help. However, it can also be just someone being persistently unpleasant, or making you feel uncomfortable. It can also be someone pressuring you into doing something you are uncomfortable taking part in. This also includes feeling personally belittled or attacked for any aspect of your personality, origin or beliefs during debates. If you are unsure, we encourage you to come and speak with either our equity officers or member of the committee; they will take what you have to say seriously and give you advice and support. Some specific examples of behavior that is unacceptable at MUDS include, but are not limited to:

- Language or actions that directly attack, vilify or make someone feel uncomfortable based on their race, gender, sexuality, views, character or physical attributes, including during debates
- Unwanted sexual advances, or any form of sexual harassment
- Forcing someone to take part in something they feel uncomfortable doing, such as consuming alcohol.
- Personal attacks or slurs on individuals that make that person feel uncomfortable or unwanted, both in person and over social media.
- Conduct that belittles or offends someone during a debate based on their debating ability, manner or personal character

What Are the Roles of the Equity Officers?

The equity officers have a number of roles at MUDS. First and foremost, their job is to be the first port of call when someone has an equity complaint or concern, and to help achieve that person's desired outcome in accordance with MUDS' equity procedure. Additionally, their role is to help make MUDS a more accepting society by:

- Helping clarify any questions, queries or concerns members of the society may have
- Overseeing any review or implementation of changes to welfare policy as necessary.
- Monitoring and assisting with welfare procedures at internal and external tournaments, or appointing someone to do so in their stead.

What is MUDS' Equity Process?

If you come to us with an equity complaint, we will be guided by the outcomes that you would like.

However, MUDS equity offices are able to provide a number of other things; they can act as mediators for a discussion, they can help you find a support network to speak with, they can facilitate a broader discussion with the broader MUDS community, or even simply discuss and try our best to realise the outcome you would like to see. Furthermore, they can raise your concerns anonymously with both the person who has committed the equity violation, and with the society as a whole, in order to ensure it is made clear that such actions are unwanted, and to try and prevent them occurring again.

Furthermore, MUDS is able to escalate any concerns to the University of Melbourne Student Union, so that action can be taken at a higher level. The student union has its own code of

practice when dealing with equity complaints, and is often better placed to deal with equity complaints of a more serious nature, as they have far greater options available to them. The student union is also better placed to help liaise with any outside legal or law enforcement agencies in the most severe of cases.

MUDS equity officers will endeavour to aid anyone with any equity concern to achieve their desired outcome as quickly and as efficiently as possible. As such, all concerns will be followed up within no more than seven days of the initial complaint, and appropriate action will be taken to ensure all concerns are addressed in this time.

If a person is unhappy with the way in which a particular incident is handled, they are encouraged to directly raise their concerns with either the equity officers, or with any member of the executive branch of the committee.