

## Summer 2022 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Initiative (USI) is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the mentorship of a partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the [application guide](#) to confirm your eligibility before applying.

**Applications close at midnight on Sunday January 30, 2022.**

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### **Research project title: Researching possibilities for justice-oriented workplace accommodation and accessibility policies at the City of Vancouver**

#### **Project Background & Overview:**

The City of Vancouver's workplace accommodations are currently administered through an individualist, compliance-based lens, arising out of the practices designed to "return to work" after a workplace injury. While the City recognizes the duty to accommodate, the work of advocating for and receiving accommodations rests on staff with disabilities. The City's consideration of accommodations is also quite narrow in scope excluding, for example, accommodations for religious and/or cultural practices and holidays.

Ascribing to the medical model of disabilities, the City places a burden of evidence on individuals in order to grant accommodations, requiring staff to interact with gatekeepers who may not have adequate understanding of the spectrum of disabilities and access needs, including, for example, mental illness. The City's treatment of access as a logistical interaction leads to *access fatigue* – a term coined by disability advocate Annika Konrad to describe the rhetorical work that people with disabilities must constantly do to educate others about their needs – and *forced intimacy*, referred to by disability justice organizer Mia Mingus as the experience of people with disabilities being expected to share personal details in order to receive basic access, and the ways in which they must build and sustain emotional intimacy and relationships in order to receive safe, appropriate and good access.

Moving towards a healthy city, including creating environments that everyone can feel safe and thrive in, means interrogating and reimagining our culture and understanding of access. This is part of the ongoing work of the Equity Office – to advocate on behalf of those who have been institutionally excluded, in order to reverse marginalization and shift our internal structures and cultures in the direction of equity.

#### **Project description**

The purpose of this project is to examine possibilities and establish imperatives for shifting to a more progressive, justice-oriented corporate accessibility or accommodation policy/ies at the City of Vancouver.

The Equity Office would like to draw on alternative frameworks for understanding access, including the social model of disability and principles put forward by the disability justice movement. For example, the ethos of *access intimacy* – which describes the elusive feeling of comfort or familiarity when someone

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truly understands and anticipates your access needs (also coined by Mia Mingus) – could reorient our current approach to one of valuing disability, focusing on relationships over logistics, promoting interdependence, and reframing how solidarity and equity can be practiced. The Equity Office is particularly interested in understanding, through this research, how such principles have been actioned and put into practice by other employers, including any large public sector organizations leading in this area of work.

## Project scope

Conduct a scan of corporate accommodation policies in Canada, with a focus on public sector organizations. Identify best practice accessibility practices and protocols with specific attention to those that draw from anti-oppressive and justice-oriented frameworks.

Conduct interviews with progressive organizations and institutions as needed.

Time permitting, conduct a review of academic, professional, legal and self-published literature (e.g. papers, blogs, workbooks, court decisions, zines, etc.) on anti-oppressive, creative and justice-oriented frameworks for understanding accommodation and access.

The research may explore questions such as:

- What does it look like to have a corporate accessibility or accommodation policy and set of practices that are aligned with the framework and principles of disability justice?
- What is the recommended scope of a corporate accessibility or accommodation policy and what are the possibilities and limits of what it can include (e.g. disabilities, religions and Indigenous spiritualities, cultural practices and holidays)?
- Are there examples of best practice accessibility protocols? What are progressive organizations doing in this space?
- What do court cases and human rights tribunal decisions tell us about the possibilities and limits of accommodations? Which types of claims around accommodations (related to disabilities, religion and culture) are supported by courts and tribunals, and which types are not?
- What are the potential drawbacks and/or pitfalls of an accommodation policy rooted in anti-oppression? How could such policies be drafted and implemented to protect against misuse (such as frivolous, fraudulent or exploitative accommodation requests)?
- What might access intimacy look like at the City of Vancouver and how can it be created?

## Deliverables

- An overview of the research completed, in a written report or different format that the Scholar chooses in consultation with the Equity Office (e.g. PowerPoint deck, infographic or diagram, etc.).  
The final deliverable should include:
  - A survey of promising practices from other organizations
  - Recommendations for next steps
  - (Optional) A summary of the literature review, if completed
- An optional presentation of findings to internal stakeholders at the City of Vancouver, including the Equity Office and Department of Human Resources
- An executive summary for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).

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## Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete.
- This project must be completed between May 2, 2022 and August 12, 2022
- The scholar is to complete hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.

## Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Experience conducting stakeholder engagement events, including facilitation skills, is an asset
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Community engagement experience
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys
- Design and layout skills
- Relevant lived experience as a person experiencing barriers to access in workplaces is an asset
- Knowledge of justice, equity, decolonization, inclusion and anti-oppression

Applications close **midnight Sunday January 30, 2022**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at [sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca](mailto:sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca) if you have questions

## Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 19. [Click here for details and to register.](#)

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>