

# Community Climate Committee December 2021 Survey Report

## Executive Summary

The inaugural climate survey for the astro units yielded 41 responses. While there are positive things drawn from the survey, there is some work needed to ensure that all members (particularly postdocs and students) feel welcome in the department. Several useful pieces of feedback were received by the climate committee, which we summarise and respond to below.

## Introduction:

Below is a summary of the results of the first survey conducted by the Community Climate Committee (CCC) in December, 2021. The goal of the survey was to get a sense for general thoughts on the climate, to collect feedback on recommendations that the CCC is preparing, and to establish a baseline with which to judge future changes to the climate of the astro units. We received 40 responses in total, although not all respondents completed all questions. A distilled version of the feedback is provided in the sections below, along with anything the CCC is able to comment on at this time. The feedback received in all sections of the survey was generally thoughtful and constructive. Thank you to everyone who filled out the survey.

If you have any questions about the contents of this report, you can email the CCC at [contact.ccc@astro.utoronto.ca](mailto:contact.ccc@astro.utoronto.ca).

## Section 1: Demographics

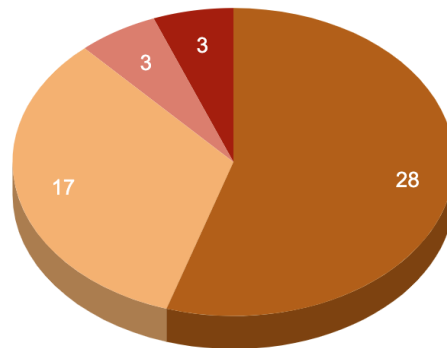
We summarise the demographics of those who answered the survey below.

### What is your position within the astronomy department?

Position	# of respondents	Response rate*
Undergraduate Student	0	N/A
Graduate Student	17	31%
Post-doc	9	38%
Faculty	6	13%

Staff	4	20%
Prefer not to say/left blank	5	N/A

\*Fraction of (estimated) total population in each category.



● David A Dunlap Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics  
● Dunlap Institute ● Other ● Prefer not to say

## Section 2: Responses to work in progress

We start by repeating summaries of the anonymous feedback to several current works in progress. We respond to the feedback at the end of the section.

Feedback:

### Survey and dropbox

There were requests for an online counterpart to the physical dropbox. There were also requests for more regular updates to the department from the CCC beyond the bi-annual surveys and reports, particularly surrounding works in progress and submitted recommendations. Additionally, concern has been raised about how the dropbox could be used in a negative or harmful way against individuals in the department.

### UofT Slack community agreement

There were requests for guidance to be included in the community agreement surrounding membership on the Astro @ UofT Slack workspace (e.g. undergraduates, visitors, collaborators, etc.), membership duration (e.g. how long before joining or after leaving the department), and which channels certain member types are able to access (e.g. certain channels limited to members at a particular career stage). The CCC has also been

asked for clarification surrounding who will moderate the Astro @ UofT workspace, and what is meant by “an independent group of astronomy community members”.

### Hiring Practices

Disagreement with the proposed hiring practices recommendations was expressed, and it was suggested that hiring committees should only consider the scientific quality/merit of the candidate, to avoid the potential for discrimination. More clarity on the role of the EDI advocate on hiring committees was requested. Concern was raised about the effectiveness of the recommended implicit bias and anti-racism training for the hiring committee, with the suggestion that the CCC assess whether this training can consistently and meaningfully reduce biased behaviour in participants. It was also mentioned that some of the suggested recommendations are already in place at the university level, and as such the CCC should investigate this so that we are not duplicating previously defined procedures.

### CCC response to feedback on current projects:

This feedback on each project has been communicated to the individual CCC working groups outlined above.

1. The CCC has plans to implement an **online version** of the dropbox, ideally alongside the implementation of the physical dropbox. We hope to implement **both tools by May 2022**.
2. The CCC recommends that the moderators of the Astro@UofT Slack workspace provide a liaison to the CCC so that guidance on climate can be included in moderation concerns within the Slack workspace.
3. Regarding hiring and the feedback on an EDI advocate on the hiring committee, the CCC would recommend that any EDI advocate not be a member of the hiring committee itself, to avoid any conflict of interest. The CCC will host an all-astro open meeting with leadership to highlight steps in the faculty hiring process, and how recommendations on hiring from the CCC are included. This is scheduled for **May 13, 2022 at 9am Eastern**.

## Section 3: Feedback on the CCC Recommendations and Outcomes

The climate survey included space to provide feedback on the CCC recommendations. We begin by summarising the anonymous feedback and conclude the section with a response from the CCC.

### Feedback:

#### Survey

It was suggested that the CCC assess the required frequency of departmental surveys with time, particularly once the physical and online dropboxes are implemented. As well, more specific information about the training that members of the CCC completed in

relation to reading and responding to survey feedback and dropbox submissions was requested.

### **Mentorship program**

It was suggested that the organizers of the mentorship program consider matching mentors and mentees using other parameters beyond research interests or career trajectories, such as intersecting identities. Concern was also raised about graduate students representing the department in their interactions with undergraduate students.

### **Miscellaneous**

Concern was raised over the response rate of the survey and how that may affect the interpretation of the results. In particular, the CCC was asked to be aware of potential biases in the responses and to consider all opinions and feedback, not just the most common. It was also suggested that the CCC consider additional or alternative methods for survey respondents to express feedback on works in progress and recommendations and outcomes, to better gauge the opinions of department members.

### **CCC response to feedback on CCC recommendations:**

This general feedback has been discussed within the CCC.

1. CCC Survey: the CCC will investigate professional survey services for future surveys to promote higher response rates and assist in survey design and analysis.
2. CCC Training: the CCC has so far been focused primarily on understanding what resources are available to the committee and to the department. The CCC training was led by the manager of the High Risk, Faculty Support & Mental Health department. The training consisted of understanding the role and responsibilities of the CCC when reading and responding to feedback from the department, requirements and limitations on confidentiality, and how best to provide support and resources to members of the department when needed.
3. The CCC continues to provide input to the Training and Mentoring Committee, with advice on including an EDI lens in training. We note that volunteers to serve on the CCC are sorely needed and we welcome volunteers of all career stages.

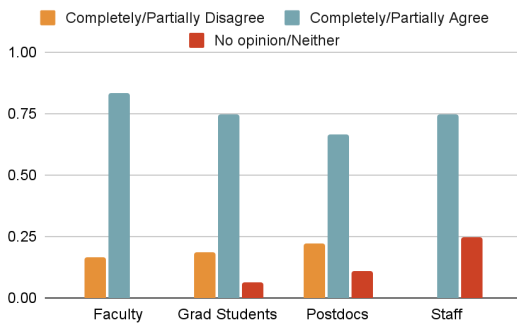
## **Section 4: Tracking the climate**

Here we present the quantitative results of the five questions from Section 4 of the survey. We have broken down the responses by position and affiliation within the department, and we plot the results as the percentage of total responses from each category.

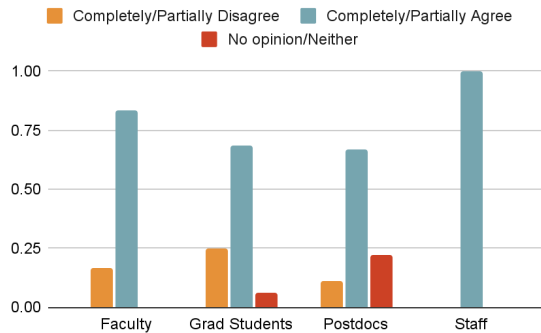
Roughly a **quarter of respondents** who are graduate students feel that the department is not welcoming to people like them. **A quarter of postdocs** who responded feel that they have not been able to reach a comfortable level of social interaction with other department

members. Over **a quarter of faculty members** do not feel that they can approach other faculty members with questions or discussions.

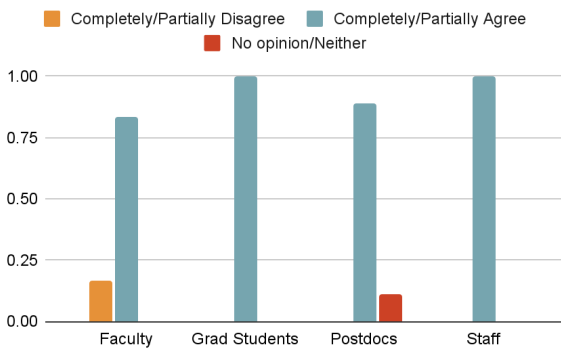
I've been able to reach a comfortable level of social interaction with other department members.



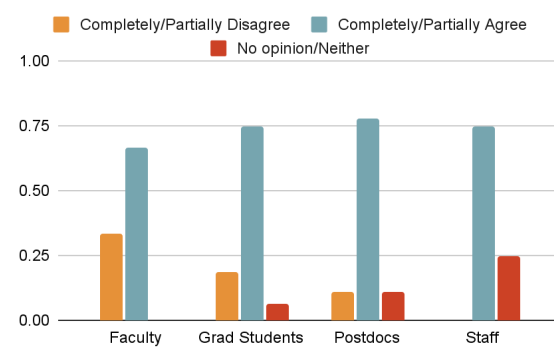
The department feels welcoming to people like



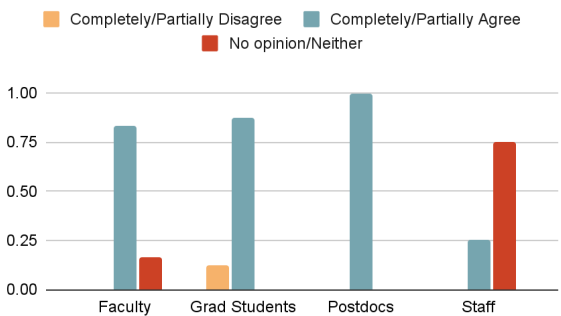
I feel like academic integrity is valued here.



I feel like I can approach (other) faculty members for questions or discussions when I need to.

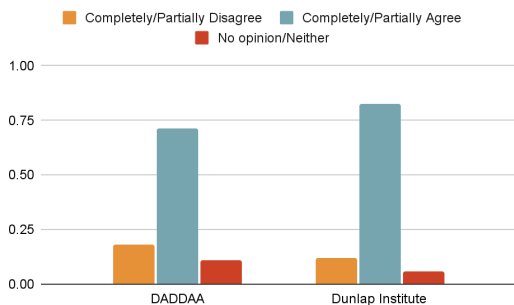


I feel like I have access to all the academic resources I need.

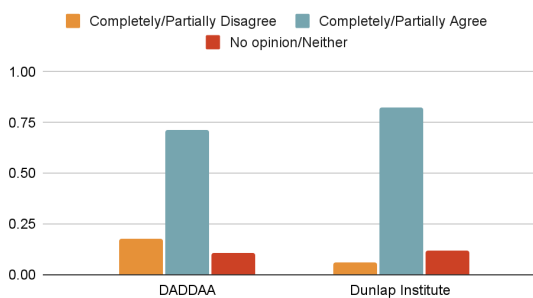


In addition to questions of welcome and inclusion, we asked about social interactions between department members and how members feel academic integrity is valued. We also polled respondents on whether or not they have the academic resources they need.

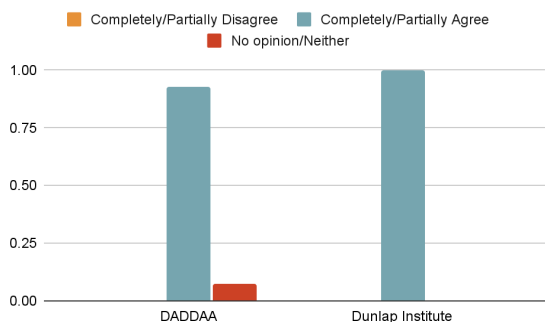
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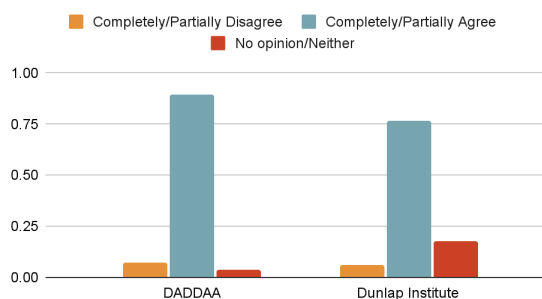
I've been able to reach a comfortable level of social interaction with other department members.



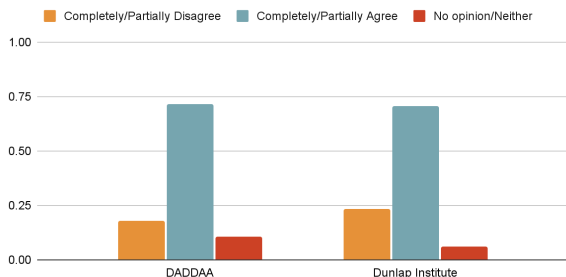
I feel like academic integrity is valued here.



I feel like I have access to all the academic resources I need.



I feel like I can approach (other) faculty members for questions or discussions when I need to.



The survey responses reflect some positive points, and some room for growth. We look forward to higher response rates in future surveys.

## Section 5: Anonymous feedback/reporting

We included a section on general feedback from survey respondents. The responses have been aggregated in the section below. We respond after the survey responses.

## Feedback:

It was suggested that the CCC consider how we can reach members of the department who do not respond to the surveys.

There were concerns raised about the negative effects of too much focus on the department climate, such as searching for problems where none exist.

More clarity was requested from the CCC surrounding guidelines for reporting issues, particularly what issues can and should be brought to the committee's attention (e.g. LGBTQ+ issues, EDI issues, etc.).

It was asked whether the CCC has a website, either internal or external, with information about the committee (membership, contact info, documents and reports, etc.).

It was also suggested that the CCC regularly update the department on progress on the recommendations outlined in the American Physical Society (APS) and Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) reports.

There was a request for the CCC to consider ways to help members of the department meet and interact, particularly if the pandemic and work-from-home persists.

## CCC response to feedback on general topics:

1. The CCC will investigate additional professional support on running climate surveys.
2. The mandate of the CCC includes recommendations from the APS and CCDI reports which include addressing issues already raised. Current surveys suggest that focusing on improving elements of the climate are still warranted.
3. The CCC continues to solicit guidelines on reporting within the Canadian context. The guidelines for reporting are not as strict as e.g. the US Title IX system.
4. The CCC is currently building our webpage and will include resources on climate including a copy of this newsletter and a spreadsheet of the recommendations and outcomes from the APS and CCDI reports. It will include the CCC email, membership, the committee's Terms of Reference and other public documents. The date for launch is **April/May 2022**.
5. The CCC is planning a town hall presenting the summary of our work to the astro units on **April 20, 2022 in the 2pm Colloquium slot**.
6. The CCC welcomes this feedback - bringing the members of our units back together is a priority for one of our subcommittees and we encourage members to join the CCC.