*New Skills ready network*  
Definitions of Key Equity Concepts

**Access** – Access refers to ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure that learners have equitable opportunities to participate in and take full advantage of their education. Access depends on factors such as geography, resources, academic preparation and awareness.

**Diversity** – Representation; composition. A wide range of qualities and attributes within a person, group or community. When we celebrate diversity, communities and workplaces become richer, drawing upon the variety of experiences, perspectives and skills that people can contribute.1 “Diversity” can address a variety of factors.

**Equality** – An approach to distributing resources and opportunities proportionally without

consideration of differences in needs.

**Equity** – Fairness in outcomes; creating just outcomes; giving everyone what they need to be

successful. Acknowledging everyone’s unique situation and addressing historic and current-day

systemic barriers. (Contrast with equality, where each individual is treated the same).2

**Implicit Bias** (Interchangeable with Unconscious Bias) – Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual’s awareness or intentional control.3

**Inclusion** – Acknowledging and valuing people’s differences so as to enrich or shift social planning, decision making and quality of life for everyone. In an inclusive society, we all have a sense of belonging, acceptance and recognition as valued and contributing members of society.4

**Opportunity Gap** – An observable disparity in access and/or outcomes for a specific subgroup or

special population. These gaps are due to systemic inequities, implicit biases, stereotypes and

outright discrimination based on group identities.

**Structural Racism** – A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.5

**Systemic Racism** – In many ways “systemic racism” and “structural racism” are synonymous. If there is a difference between the terms, it can be said to exist in the fact that a structural racism analysis pays more attention to the historical, cultural and social psychological aspects of our currently racialized society.5

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1 <https://nonprofitoregon.org/sites/default/files/NAO-Equity-Lens-Guide-2019.pdf>

2 <https://www.shorter-goodenconsulting.com/>

3 <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/>

4 <https://nonprofitoregon.org/sites/default/files/NAO-Equity-Lens-Guide-2019.pdf>

5 <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/structural-racism-definition/>