

# Student equality, diversity and inclusion policy

Student experience

Version: 1.0

## Student Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

### Introduction

1. Under the current University Strategic Plan and supporting strategies the University strives to be a vibrant, inclusive and successful University and is committed to the pursuit of inclusive and flexible forms of Higher Education that meets the needs of employers and prepares students to succeed.
2. The University aims to foster a community with a culture of mutual trust, fairness, harmony and respect devoid of hatred and intolerance. It is committed to the elimination of all forms of both direct and indirect discrimination (Annex 1: Definitions) and will take appropriate decisive action wherever possible to enforce this commitment.
3. The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Scheme 2013 provides the practical means to translate its staff and student equality policy statements into action to support, promote, integrate and monitor this commitment for everyone that works, studies or visits the University. The scheme enables the University to meet its general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2010 and other related legislation, and to be responsive to sector good practice.
4. This document sets out the University's equality, diversity and inclusion policy specifically for students and applies to students studying both on and off campus. It complements and reinforces the University's position articulated in the staff policies '*Equality in employment in the University*' and '*Behaviour at work*'.

### Principles

5. The University will implement and review policies to promote fair treatment and equality of opportunity for all prospective and current students taking into account the diversity of the student body. This activity will be aligned to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and in particular Chapter B2: Admissions, B4: Enabling student development and achievement, and Part C: Public information.
6. The University will advance equality of opportunity for people who share the 'protected characteristics' that are listed below, and all other members of the University community.
7. The University will give protection against unfair discrimination regardless of:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marriage and civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity

- Race
  - Religion and belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation
8. The University expects all students to take responsibility and behave in accordance with this policy respecting the principles of the policy in their practices and dealings with the University community; and in a way that reflects and appreciates the diversity of the University community.
  9. The University will take seriously all allegations of discrimination. Any allegation made will be investigated thoroughly.
  10. Initial support and advice can be obtained from the Student Advice Manager in Student Services, LIS, or other appropriate support services outlined in the University student handbook.
  11. Formal complaints concerning discrimination will be considered through the University's *Students Complaints* procedures.
  12. The *Student Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* policy is based on the concept of reasonable behaviour and that allegations will not be knowingly malicious, frivolous or vexatious.<sup>1</sup>
  13. The University will monitor, review and report on student equality, diversity and complaints on an annual basis.

<sup>1</sup> Students or Staff knowingly making untrue or malicious complaints may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Annex 1: Definitions**

- **Equality**

Equal treatment involves much more than simply treating everyone alike; it requires a recognition that some groups and individuals have particular and specific needs that need to be met if they are to enjoy equal access to the services offered by the University. The University recognises that it may need to provide services in a range of different or more flexible ways, in order to ensure genuine equality of access or opportunity for groups and individuals who approach those services from a position of persistent and longstanding disadvantage.

- **Diversity**

Valuing diversity involves an acknowledgement of the benefits and intrinsic worth derived from the range of difference within our community, and fostering it as a strength. The University aims to celebrate and to value the differences between individuals' cultural, social and intellectual contribution to the University and will seek to promote greater mutual understanding between groups and individuals who reflect these differences, and will seek to utilise the talents and experiences that each and every individual can bring to the institution.

- **Inclusion**

Inclusion involves the University and its staff in designing and operating flexible services, practices and procedures that take appropriate account of the needs of students, staff and visitors. This is particularly relevant to students with disabilities.

Other definitions:

- **Direct discrimination** - treating a person less favourably than another in comparable circumstances because of a protected characteristic.
- **Discrimination by association** is direct discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person with a protected characteristic. (This includes carers of disabled people and elderly relatives, who can claim they were treated unfairly because of duties that they had to carry out at home relating to their care work. It also covers discrimination against someone because, for example, their partner is from another country).
- **Discrimination by perception** is direct discrimination against someone because others think they have a protected characteristic (even if they don't).
- **Indirect discrimination** - putting in place a policy or practice that has a differential (positive or negative) impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively and legitimately justified.
- **Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to any of the protected characteristics or any other personal characteristics of the recipient which:
  - has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person;
  - Or is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating his or her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him or her, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Conduct may be harassment whether or not the person behaving in that way intends to offend. Everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to him or her and to have his or her feelings respected by others. In some cases, first-time conduct which unintentionally causes offence will not be harassment but it will become harassment if the conduct continues after the recipient has made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to him or her. However a single incident will be considered as harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

- **Bullying** may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power which is meant to undermine, humiliate or injure the recipient. Unacceptable behaviour may be face to face or in other forms such as written communication, visual images, e-mail or social media.
- **Victimisation** is the less favourable treatment of someone compared to their peers because they, in good faith, have complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would include the isolation of someone because he or she has made a complaint.