

University of Plymouth

Equality and Diversity Policy

Summary

This document outlines:

- Our policy and commitment to equality and diversity for students, employees and others;
- Information about how we put this policy into practice and how members of the university community are responsible for helping to make this happen;
- Policies that are directly associated with, and form part of, our overall equality and diversity commitments that you should be aware of;
- How we meet the equality reporting requirements expected of us under the public sector equality duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010;
- The procedures that people can use to make a complaint about discrimination, how to contact us to do this, and the support that we offer in these circumstances;
- How we try to provide equality opportunities for employees and students; and
- A summary of the definitions of types of discrimination as set out in the Equality Act.



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1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out our commitment, including the commitment of our Board of Governors, Vice-Chancellor and senior management, to promote equal opportunities and work to prevent any unlawful or unfair discrimination and harassment in your place of work or study. It applies to all our staff and students.

We are committed to the principles of equal opportunities and respect for individuals in creating and maintaining an inclusive environment. We value and celebrate diversity, seeing this as critical to achieving our strategic aims and long-term success. We work to recruit and develop employees and students from a wide range of backgrounds and promote an inclusive culture where:

- We provide a supportive and inclusive learning, working and social environment where everyone feels that they are valued and can work to achieve their potential;
- We offer opportunities that are open to everyone, and decisions are based on merit and are free from bias;
- We work to make sure that all of our students, employees and visitors, as well as anyone who applies or wants to apply to work or study with us, are treated fairly and with dignity and respect, and do not face discrimination.

We are committed to providing equality for everyone, regardless of:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Ethnicity (including race, colour and nationality);
- Sex;
- Gender reassignment;
- Religion or belief;
- Sexual orientation;
- Marriage and civil partnership; and
- Pregnancy and maternity (whether or not you are pregnant or have given birth recently).

These are defined in the Equality Act 2010 as 'protected characteristics'.

To support our equality and diversity aims and values, and to meet our legal commitments, we have a number of linked policies, schemes and action plans, which support and form part of this overall policy.

2. Commitments

As a university, we:

- Value diversity and promote equal opportunities for everyone;
- Promote respect and encourage good relations within and between groups;
- Aim to meet the different needs of different groups, as appropriate, while promoting shared values;
- Promote an inclusive and harmonious place of work and study where people respect others and where harassment and bullying, intimidation and violence are not tolerated;
- Prevent unlawful discrimination and victimisation (see appendix A);
- Meet our legal obligations; and
- Take seriously and deal with situations where anyone has broken this policy.

3. Responsibilities

The Board of Governors, through the Vice-Chancellor, has ultimate responsibility for making sure this policy is followed in full. Each manager will deliver the equality commitments in their areas of responsibility.

On a day-to-day basis, the Head of Resourcing, Diversity and Inclusion and the Equality and Diversity Team, alongside our committees and others, support us in guiding, putting into practice and meeting our yearly reporting responsibilities under the public sector equality duty, as well as making sure that we regularly review our equality and diversity policy and update it as necessary to reflect UK equality law.

We expect all of our employees, students and partners, and other people carrying out work or delivering services on our behalf, to keep to this policy and the associated policies referred to within it. We expect every member of our university community to promote a culture which is free from illegal discrimination and all forms of harassment and bullying. Failure to meet these responsibilities may lead to civil action or criminal proceedings against an individual or an institution (or both).

We will investigate any incidents of discrimination, harassment or bullying, and may dismiss or expel the person responsible for the unacceptable behaviour.

4. Implementation

We will:

- Make sure that employees, students and visitors are aware of our equality and diversity policies and that the procedures are available if you need to make a complaint;
- Monitor and report on our progress on putting into practice all equality and diversity policies and our equality scheme;

- Consider equality and diversity, where appropriate, in policies, strategies and procedures to make sure that they promote equality and do not unlawfully discriminate;
- Make sure that employees and students, and representatives from their unions, are provided with appropriate forums (for example, our Equality and Diversity Committees, employee networks and student liberation societies) to discuss equality and diversity issues and raise any concerns;
- Provide a network of trained harassment advisors to provide confidential advice and guidance for students and staff;
- Have procedures in place to support the fair appointment, promotion and development of staff, and the fair selection, teaching and assessment of students;
- Provide managers and employees with appropriate equality and diversity training and development;
- Make sure that people know they must keep to our equality and diversity policy by including this information in our job descriptions;
- Recognise and review work by employees in helping to put in place our equality and diversity policy and scheme as part of our yearly performance-management process;
- Ask for commitments from our suppliers and partners to make sure that they take steps to promote equality and diversity and prevent discrimination; and
- Make sure there are suitable resources in place to enforce this policy effectively.

5. Review of our Policies and Equality Scheme

We will regularly review this policy and the relevant policies that are linked to it, as well as our equality scheme. We will formally assess and report on the progress that we are making towards meeting our equality commitments each year, and publish this information on our website. We will take action when we identify possible inequality or discrimination.

The relevant policies that form part of this review are as follows.

- [The Anti-bullying and harassment policy](#)
- [The Religious diversity policy and associated guidance documents](#)
- [Transgender employees and students policy and procedures](#)
- [Employment of disabled staff policy and procedures](#)
- [The Equal pay policy](#)

Appendices B and C to this policy outline our commitment to equal opportunities for staff and students.

Our equality scheme sets out the equality objectives that we are working to meet in line with our public sector equality duty. We report our progress on these objectives each year through our equality report.

6. Complaints of Discrimination

If you believe that you have suffered any type of discrimination, harassment or victimisation as, or by, a member of our university community, we take this very seriously. We have the following procedures in place to deal with complaints.

- **Students** can raise complaints matter formally through the [Students' Complaints Procedure](#).
- **Employees** can raise complaints formally through the [Grievance Procedure](#).
- **Members of the public** should send their complaint to the relevant university service.

We will make every effort to make sure that people who complain of bullying and harassment are not victimised, and that we deal with any complaints quickly.

a. Harassment and Bullying

We have a separate anti-harassment and bullying policy. This provides more details about the support that we offer as well as information on the procedures available to you if you are making a complaint about harassment or bullying. As part of this, we offer a confidential support and advice service for employees and students through our network of voluntary harassment advisors. You can download our harassment and bullying policy from www.plymouth.ac.uk/equality.

b. Hate-Crime incidents

We will not tolerate homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, racist or disablist hate incidents. This includes racial or religious hatred, encouraging racial hatred and any form of violence or encouraging violence. If you are a victim or witness of hate crime, we encourage you to report the incident, whether it happened on or off campus.

We have separate procedures for reporting [hate-crime incidents](#) and to support people in these situations. If you report a hate-crime incident, we will provide help and advice and details of where you can get further support if you want it. You can report hate-crime incidents by phone, by filling in the online form or in person at any of the following locations.

- The university library
- Any campus security offices

- Students' Union Advice Office
- International Students' Advisory Service
- Talent and Organisational Development
- The Multi-Faith Chaplaincy

You can also contact our Equality and Diversity Team and harassment advisors for help and advice on reporting these incidents.

7. Language

We recognise that prejudice and discrimination may arise and be reinforced by our use of language, which may not be neutral and free from personal bias. Words and phrases can be associated with apparently negative attitudes and may unintentionally offend people, including members of groups that face prejudice, harassment or discrimination.

We expect every member of our university community to try to make sure that they do not use language that may cause offence to others. This includes when writing or speaking and in material that is published or sent by email. Rather than tell people what language they can and can't use, we ask employees and students to use good judgement and be aware of common inappropriate or offensive references in relation to the protected characteristics.

The use of social media is increasingly common for universities, students and employees and we recognise that the material that appears on it can have a significant effect on people. We have produced [guidelines](#) for employees, workers and others providing services to the university, to help people properly portray, promote and protect employees, students and the university on social media.

For guidance for students, visit: www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/it-services.

8. Advertising and information

Our advertisements and publications for employee and student recruitment will state our commitment to equality and diversity. We will work to make sure that the language and images used in all publications and written and electronic material is inclusive and does not discriminate.

We will clearly show the entry requirements for courses in our student prospectus and outline facilities available to students. Any other details we send out to applicants should refer to our equality and diversity policies.

We will share information about job opportunities throughout the university and we will also advertise them outside the university unless there is a justifiable reason not to.

9. Publication and Communication for this Policy

The Equality and Diversity Team will publish this policy on our website so that it is available to all employees, students and other interested people. We can also provide copies of this policy in different formats (for example, Braille) if you ask us to.

10. Contacts for this policy

If you have questions about this policy or the way we put it into effect, please contact:

The Equality and Diversity Team
Plymouth University PL4 8AA.
Phone: +44 (0)1752 582060

Email: equality@plymouth.ac.uk Website: www.plymouth.ac.uk/equality

Appendix A – Forms of discrimination (Equality Act 2010)

The legal definitions vary but, broadly speaking, discrimination can be either direct or indirect.

Direct discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably than others would be treated in the same circumstances because they have a protected characteristic, as referred to in paragraph 1 of this document.

Indirect discrimination is when applying a condition or practice puts someone from a group of people with a protected characteristic (see paragraph 1) at a particular disadvantage.

Indirect discrimination can only be justified in exceptional circumstances if it can be shown that the action was reasonable in managing the business or organisation, that is, it is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'.

A legitimate aim might be any lawful decision made in running the business or organisation, but if it has a discriminatory effect, the sole aim of reducing costs is likely to be unlawful. Being proportionate in this context means being fair and reasonable, including showing that you have considered 'less discriminatory' alternatives to any decision.

Discrimination by association is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who has a protected characteristic, as referred to in paragraph 1 of this document. For example, disability discrimination against someone who is a carer of a disabled person.

Discrimination linked to a perceived characteristic is direct discrimination against someone because it is believed that they have a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually have that characteristic, for example, discrimination against someone because they are thought to be gay but are not.

Harassment can be defined as being 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

Harassment applies to all protected characteristics, as referred to in paragraph 1 of this document, except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership.

Employees can complain about behaviour that they find offensive, even if it is not directed at them, and they do not have to have the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment by association or because of a perceived protected characteristic.

For more details, please see our anti-harassment and bullying policy at www.plymouth.ac.uk/equality.

Victimisation is where one person treats another less favourably because he or she has asserted their legal rights in line with the Equality Act (2010) or helped someone else to do so. This includes making a complaint, taking legal action, providing evidence related to proceedings or claiming that discrimination has taken place. Because every situation is different, the law states that there is no legal requirement to compare treatment of a complainant with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint.

Victimisation may take place if, for example, a student claims they have encountered racism from a tutor, and as a result either the student or the tutor is ignored by other staff members or students.

An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

Genuine occupational requirements – Under current legislation, any job may be restricted to a particular characteristic if the characteristic is a ‘genuine occupational requirement’ (GOR) for the job, or for the situation within which it is carried out. (For example, a religious organisation could request that a job holder is a practising member of their particular faith.) However, the circumstances in which this applies are very limited and would be exceptional in the University of Plymouth. Please contact the Talent and Organisational Development Team if you need advice on this.

Appendix B – Equal opportunities for employees

Recruitment and selection

We expect all appropriately qualified applicants to be given equal consideration during the recruitment process and not be discriminated against on any grounds set out in section 1 of this policy.

We will make sure that the selection criteria to be used for job opportunities are clearly stated in our job descriptions, person specifications or appointment packs, and shortlisting and interviewing processes will be thorough, fair and free from illegal discrimination. To support this, we will provide training for all employees involved in recruitment and selection to help them understand our processes and make them aware of relevant employment laws.

We include a recruitment monitoring form as part of our application forms. Information gathered on this form will **not** be used in the selection process and will only be used for equality and diversity monitoring purposes.

We welcome applications from people who are currently under-represented in our university community, and from suitably qualified people with disabilities. If you have a disability, we will make reasonable adjustments to our recruitment and selection process, and to our workplace and working arrangements if you are successful in your application to come and work with us

Our recruitment and selection panels, including those used for internal staff promotions, will include both men and women, apart from in exceptional circumstances that have been agreed with the Talent and Organisational Development Team.

Data monitoring

We ask employees and job applicants to provide us with diversity monitoring information to help us understand more about our workforce and help us to assess how effective our policies and procedures are at supporting equality. We will keep all of the information in line with the Data Protection Act, and access to this information is strictly limited.

Working conditions

We work to take account of the needs of individual employees. Wherever reasonably possible, we support staff by allowing flexitime, flexible working and special contractual terms in line with relevant employment law. This will help with requests to try to support people with caring for dependants and meeting religious commitments and so on. We will also make reasonable adjustments to your working environment

to make it possible for you to carry out your job if you have a disability and make us aware of this.

Staff development

We do not discriminate on any of the grounds referred to in section 1 of this policy statement when providing training and development that allows you to carry out your job more effectively. This applies whether you are full-time or part-time or on a permanent or fixed-term contract. We will provide you with, and expect you to take part in, appropriate training to support our equality policies. We will keep records of who has completed training, and monitor these records.

Advice and support

We provide online, telephone and face-to-face support if you need it. This includes support from harassment advisors, the Equality and Diversity Team, Talent and Organisational Development and staff counsellors. You can also get advice about the learning, teaching and support of disabled students through Disability ASSIST Services.

Appendix C – Equal opportunities for students

Admissions

We will make sure that all appropriately qualified applicants are given equal consideration during the selection process, and will not be discriminated against on any of the grounds referred to in section 1 of this policy statement. We welcome and support people with disabilities, including specific learning disabilities, and will make reasonable adjustments and try to meet your needs if this applies to you.

Selection

The entry qualifications that we state for courses only include those that are necessary and justifiable. All selection processes will be thorough and carried out fairly, and will only look to see if you meet the course requirements. The employees we involve in the selection process will be trained to achieve this. If we offer you a place on a course, we may invite you to an information interview to identify any reasonable adjustments that would help you while you are studying with us.

Curriculum

It is the responsibility of executive deans, heads of school, associate deans (learning and teaching), programme leaders, and all other employees who set and teach our curriculum and syllabus, to promote equality and diversity and to avoid bias and discrimination in these areas. We encourage everyone to look for opportunities to promote equality, where appropriate, throughout the curriculum. Similarly, we recognise that in the course of academic study and learning, there will be times when it is also important to discuss and explore examples of discrimination, potentially discriminatory materials and information and situations which some members of the class may feel are culturally or otherwise sensitive.

Learning materials

We expect learning materials to be non-discriminatory. We recognise, however, that how sensitive a person is to learning materials can be influenced by external factors and their personal circumstances, and it is not necessarily possible to be aware of this. If, during the course of learning, materials which may be seen as discriminatory or sensitive need to be used to make a point, this should be reasonably pointed out by the person using the material.

Advice and support

We will provide a range of counselling, and advice for students relating to discrimination, harassment and bullying is available from the student counsellors, harassment advisors, the Equality and Diversity Team and the Students' Union Advice Centre. Disabled students can get advice from our Disability ASSIST

Services and international students can get advice from the International Student Advisory Service.