

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY**

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The University of Aberdeen celebrates and values the diversity of its community and recognises how the range of perspectives this brings enriches University life and contributes to its success. In line with its strategic plan, [Aberdeen 2040](#), the University is committed to securing the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion. This Policy will support the University to create a positive culture where all members of its community are treated with dignity and respect. Discriminatory behaviour or treatment will not be tolerated. The University seeks to proactively provide a working and learning environment which is free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- 1.2 This Policy aims to ensure that individuals in the University community can reach their full potential through the freedom to be themselves, be authentic and not seek to conceal elements of their identity to avoid unfair treatment.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

This Policy is applicable to all members of the University community, including:

- All members of staff holding a contract of employment at the University of Aberdeen, including Postgraduate Research Students, and staff from other institutions on secondment
- Prospective members of staff applying for positions at the University
- All students, including applicants, visiting and placement students
- Visitors, including agencies or external individuals using the University's premises or services
- Individuals acting or working on the University's behalf, including suppliers of goods and services
- Contractors working at the University
- University Court members.

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The University will take a proactive approach to embedding principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 3.2 Discrimination, harassment and victimisation will not be tolerated on University's campuses. This Policy is intended to create a culture where

all forms of discriminatory behaviour are unacceptable, challenged and addressed.

3.3 The University will apply this Policy in accordance with relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) (see Appendix B for further information). The Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of the following nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

3.4 The University of Aberdeen recognises the importance and benefits of creating inclusive working, learning and social environments and practices and seeks to support staff and students where reasonable and practicable across a wider set of equality areas. These may include where staff and students identify with:

- Experience of being in the care system
- Being estranged from family
- Experiencing menopause and perimenopause
- Being a refugee or asylum seeker
- Identifying with a particular socio-economic background
- Membership of a trade union

3.5 The University will not discriminate on grounds of any of the listed characteristics above in any decisions concerning student admissions, progression, support, learning and teaching or accommodation provision.

3.6 The University will not discriminate on grounds of any of the listed characteristics above, in decisions concerning staff recruitment and selection, career development, work schedules, promotion, regrading, staff development opportunities, pay and remuneration, or reward and recognition.

3.7 The University recognises that individuals identify with more than one protected characteristic and that this intersectionality can result in

additional unfavourable treatment leading to disadvantage. The University commits to proactively analysing and understanding intersectionality and to taking action to mitigate its negative effects where appropriate. The University will continue to collect and monitor data on staff and students who identify with protected characteristics and use this information to inform policy development.

- 3.8 The University will promote a proactive approach to equality, diversity and inclusion which includes embedding equality across its functions and advancing accessibility, including digital and online accessibility.
- 3.9 Underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply to work and study at the University. Where necessary, the University may take 'positive action' to increase the representation of individuals from groups that have been under-represented in the University community. Positive action is distinct from positive discrimination which is unlawful in the UK.
- 3.10 The University aims to promote equality and foster good relations between individuals who identify with protected characteristics.
- 3.11 The University has adopted the principles of the Young Academy of Scotland's [Charter for Responsible Debate](#) (the principles can be found in Appendix D) and is committed to upholding the principles of free speech and academic freedom.
- 3.12 The University will assess the impact of its policies and practices to identify and mitigate disadvantages to individuals who identify with the characteristics above.
- 3.13 The University will celebrate and value the contributions made by individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds, challenge inequality by empowering staff and students to be active bystanders and will promote participation of under-represented groups.
- 3.14 The University will be alive to the changing social narrative on equality, diversity and inclusion. It will work with external partners in the sector and beyond to share its own learning and practice and to identify and implement good practice on an ongoing basis.
- 3.15 The University adopts a collaborative approach to progressing equality, diversity and inclusion and in particular commits to listening, learning and working with individuals who identify with protected characteristics, while understanding that the burden to enact change does not lie with them.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 University

- The University Court has overall responsibility for the implementation of this Policy. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) has specific responsibilities in relation to compliance with legislation and the proactive promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion
- Complaints of discrimination, bullying, harassment or unfair treatment will be treated timeously and sensitively with appropriate confidential monitoring undertaken
- Staff and students are made aware of the Policy through a range of communication methods
- Staff, job applicants, Court members, students, prospective students, suppliers, contractors and visitors are treated with respect and dignity at all times
- This Policy is monitored and reviewed every three years
- Offer active bystander training to give staff and students the skills to challenge unacceptable behaviour.

4.2 Staff

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Comply with this Policy
- Treat colleagues, students and visitors to the University with respect at all times
- Participate in appropriate training and wider learning opportunities to assist the University in meeting its legal and strategic commitments in relation to diversity and inclusion
- Challenge and/or report behaviour which is discriminatory where it is appropriate and safe to do so
- Heads of Schools, Directors and line managers will ensure the Policy is communicated to their team and will promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

4.3 Students

All students have a responsibility to:

- Treat students, staff and visitors to the University with respect at all times

- Challenge and/or report behaviour which is discriminatory where it is appropriate and safe to do so
- Engage in equality, diversity and inclusion development/training opportunities where applicable.

4.4 Visitors and Partners

All visitors, contractors, subcontractors, service providers and any other persons associated with the functions of the University have a responsibility to:

- Treat staff, students and others with respect at all times
- Report and/or challenge behaviour which is discriminatory where it is appropriate and safe to do so.

5. COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

5.1 The University will take reports and allegations of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other relevant complaints seriously and will investigate such complaints, which may result in disciplinary action. Following investigation, allegations of discrimination, harassment or victimisation may result in action being taken up to and including dismissal.

5.2 Staff or students who wish to make a complaint of discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or any other relevant complaint should, if appropriate, direct them initially to their Line Manager, Human Resources Partner or a Student Support Adviser. Formal action can be taken under the Staffing Policy against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace or through the Student Advice and Support Team. Reports can be made anonymously via the [Online Reporting Tool which also provides an](#) option to connect with an adviser who can discuss available support and progression options.

6. APPLICATION OF THE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

6.1 The University will apply this policy to all areas of employment including:

- Recruitment and selection of staff
- Promotion opportunities
- Evaluation of jobs and grading
- Training and development opportunities

- Discipline and grievance procedures
- Redundancy procedures
- Dismissals

6.2 The University will apply this policy to its relationship with students including:

- Access and admission to courses
- Accommodation
- Appeals and Complaints
- Assessment
- Delivery of Student Advice and Support services
- Disciplinary procedures
- Student Learning Services

6.3 Support for staff and students in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will be provided through:

- Campus Trade Unions
- The Counselling Service
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team
- Human Resources
- Heads of School and Directors
- Line Managers
- Mental Health First Aiders
- Multi-Faith Chaplaincy
- Personal Tutors
- Race Equality Champions
- School EDI Leads
- Staff Equality Networks
- Student Advice and Support Team
- Student Experience Team
- Workplace Dignity Network

6.4 Where staff or students have requirements or requests related to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, for example, reasonable adjustments, in relation to disability or accommodations made for religious observance, these will be dealt with timeously and supported where reasonable and practicable, taking all factors into account.

7. **RELATED POLICIES**

[Admissions Policy](#)

[Adoption/Surrogacy Procedure](#)
[Antiracism Strategy](#)
[Contractors Health and Safety Handbook](#)
[Digital Accessibility Policy](#)
[Employee Engagement Strategy](#)
[Flexible Working Procedure](#)
[Grievance Procedure](#)
[Homeworking Policy](#)
[Maternity/Birth Parent Procedure](#)
[Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy](#)
[Neurodiversity Equality Policy](#)
[Parental Leave \(Unpaid\) Procedure](#)
[Paternity/Co-Maternity Leave Procedure](#)
[Public Sector Equality Duty Report](#)
[Religion and Belief Policy and Guidance \(Student Issues\)](#)
[Shared Parental Leave Policy](#)
[Staffing Policy against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace](#)
[Transgender Equality Policy](#)
[University Gender Action Plan](#)
[Whistleblowing Policy](#)

Appendix A – Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Definitions

Equality

Equality in working and studying environments means equal opportunities and fairness for employees, students, job applicants and prospective students. It is where individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect and where rights are respected.

Equity

Equity refers to the manner in which individuals are treated justly and fairly. Resources and opportunities are shared based on what each individual requires. Equity acknowledges differences and that effort is required to address the ways in which opportunities are not the same amongst different groups or individuals.

Diversity

Diversity is the range of people within a workforce and/or student body. For example, this may mean people with different ages, religions, ethnicities and people with disabilities. Diversity is about recognising, respecting, and celebrating differences and the benefits this brings. A diverse environment is one in which a wide range of identities, backgrounds and mindsets coexist and contribute in different ways.

Inclusion

Inclusion is where people's differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive environment is one in which everyone feels they belong without having to conform, that their contribution is valued, and they are able to fulfil their full potential, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive work and study environment has fair policies and practices in place and enable a diverse range of people to work and study together effectively.

Appendix B – Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It defines the ways in which discrimination and unlawful treatment can manifest.

The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005

Section 26 of this Act provides that institutions must have regard to the desirability of ensuring academic freedom for those who are teaching, providing learning, or engaged in research. The exercise of such freedom must not adversely affect the person's appointment or any entitlements or privileges. In this context, academic freedom includes freedom, within the law, to hold and express ideas, to question and test established ideas and received wisdom, and to present controversial or unpopular points of view.

Positive Action

The Equality Act 2010 allows “positive action” as a proportionate means of enabling or encouraging people with a protected characteristic to overcome or minimise disadvantage or participate in activity where they are underrepresented. This includes allowing employers to recruit or promote employees because of their protected characteristic if they are as qualified as other candidates, provided this is done on a case-by-case basis rather than as a matter of policy. This is distinct from positive discrimination which is unlawful in the United Kingdom.

Positive action measures could include targeted advertising of jobs; including a statement in job adverts encouraging applications from particular groups; providing mentoring or coaching to address imbalance e.g., in senior management; additional interventions to support students e.g., where an attainment gap exists or to encourage applications from a cross-section of society.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The **public sector equality duty** is a duty on **public authorities** to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are **protected** under the Equality Act. In carrying out their functions, public authorities must have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under the Equality Act 2010. These are to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The specific duties require the University to:

- Report progress on mainstreaming the equality duty every 2 years.
- Publish equality outcomes, and report progress every 2 years.
- Assess and review policies and practices against the needs of the general duty.
- Gather and use employee information to better perform the equality duty in line with GDPR.
- Publish gender pay gap information and report progress every 2 years.
- Publish statements on equal pay and occupational segregation and every 4 years.
- Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to procurement.
- Publish information in a manner which is accessible to the public.

Appendix C – Legal Definitions

Associative discrimination

This is when an individual is treated less favourably because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic. For example, treating someone less favourably because they spend their spare time socialising with people of a certain religious group despite not sharing the same religious beliefs. A further example could be an employer disciplining an employee for taking time off work to care for their disabled mother despite not disciplining other workers who have had similar amounts of time off work.

Direct Discrimination

This is when someone is treated less favourably than another due to a protected characteristic they have. For example, an employer refusing to provide voice-activated software for an employee who has developed carpal tunnel syndrome. Not implementing this to overcome the disadvantage could be an unlawful failure to make a reasonable adjustment which would constitute discrimination.

Harassment

Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is “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”.

Indirect discrimination

Occurs when:

1. A practice, provision or criterion is applied to all, and:
2. It puts a group with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage when compared with another group
3. An individual is put at a disadvantage
4. An employer cannot show it to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

An example of indirect discrimination could be a uniform policy that requires all individuals to dress in exactly the same way without modification. This may mean that some people cannot wear an item of clothing they regard as part of their faith. This would be indirect discrimination unless the employer could show that the uniform requirement was justified.

Perceptive discrimination

Perceptive discrimination is treating an individual less favourably because it’s perceived that they have a protected characteristic, whether they do so or not. For

example, not recruiting someone because it is assumed they have a certain religious belief when they do not.

Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 outlines nine grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. These are known as 'protected characteristics' and they are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion and Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Victimisation

This is when a person is treated less favourably because they have made or supported a complaint or have raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010. Victimisation also applies if it's thought that an individual has made a complaint.

Appendix D: Young Academy of Scotland Charter for Responsible Debate

The Young Academy of Scotland proposes nine general principles for responsible public debate. These are grounded in an ideal of informed, respectful and inclusive collective decision-making. This is designed as a starting point to support discussion amongst those who initially disagree, but who listen well to each other in pursuit of common ground and common cause. The principles can be adapted and refined for specific contexts.

Informed

1. Aim for accuracy and base your contributions on evidence and experience.
2. Talk to people with different beliefs, experiences, perspectives and backgrounds.
3. Be honest in how you communicate and speak with conviction for what you believe.

Respectful

5. Listen carefully, open-mindedly, and with empathy.
6. Use emotional language judiciously, avoiding disrespectful or inflammatory language.
7. Show appreciation for good points made by others, acknowledging when they change your mind.

Inclusive

8. Communicate in ways that unite rather than divide.
9. Try to address imbalances in power, knowledge and accessibility.
10. Seek to identify common ground and shared purpose.

Title	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Author / Creator	Organisational Development
Owner	Organisational Development
Date published / approved	15 May 2023
Version	4
Date for Next Review	June 2026
Audience	All staff, students, visitors, supplier, contractors and University Court members
Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberdeen 2040 • Admissions Policy • Antiracism Strategy • Athena Swan Charter • British Sign Language Action Plan • Charter for Responsible Debate • Contractors Health and Safety Handbook • Digital Accessibility Policy • Disability Confident Scheme • Flexible Working Procedure • Gaelic Language Action Plan • Grievance Procedure • Homeworking Policy • Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy • Neurodiversity Equality Policy • Parental Leave Procedure • Paternity/Co-Maternity Leave Procedure • Public Sector Equality Duty Report • Race Equality Charter • Religion and Belief Policy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Parental leave Policy • Staffing Policy against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace • Stonewall Diversity Champions • Transgender Equality Policy • University Gender Action Plan • Whistleblowing Policy
Subject / Description	The purpose of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is to set out the University's commitment to ensuring fairness in the implementation of its functions and activities and to tackling discrimination, harassment and victimisation. It aims to provide clarity on the University's legal obligations and the University's commitment to striving to achieve a fully inclusive working and learning environment, beyond legal baselines and positioning itself as a centre of excellence in equality, diversity and inclusion
Equality Impact Assessment	Completed May 2023 Approved July 2023
Section	Directorate of People
Theme	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Keywords	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion