

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

## 1. UNIVERSITY OF SUFFOLK EQUALITY POLICY STATEMENT

At the University of Suffolk, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is core to our being; it is one of our six core values. We are committed to an inclusive approach to the delivery of Higher Education. We are working to ensure that the University of Suffolk is supportive, open, and accessible to all those wishing to participate in and capable of benefiting from Higher Education.

We value all the different people studying and working at the University and we are committed to developing policies and processes and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that tackle inequality and exclusion.

As an employer, we seek to be recognised as an employer of choice in the region, and to attract the best employees regardless of background or lived experience. We encourage applications from and we aim to develop the careers of individuals from underrepresented groups in the University or Higher Education Sector.

We are wholly committed to protecting people with “protected characteristics” and have a zero-tolerance approach to acts of discrimination or exclusion. The protected characteristics are:

- o Age
- o Disability
- o Gender
- o Gender reassignment

- o Marriage and civil partnership
- o Pregnancy and maternity
- o Race and ethnicity
- o Religion or belief
- o Sexual orientation

In addition to promoting equality of opportunity and equality of access to our services, we will also uphold a principle of diversity and inclusion throughout the institution. Diversity adds another dimension to the equality agenda, by making sure that the differences between people, groups and identities are understood, valued and respected. Managing diversity is about improving how people can study or work together by recognising and valuing their similarities and differences. We will create an inclusive place to study and work enabling staff and students to fully participate in learning and work activities and demonstrate their knowledge and strengths with a sense of belonging.

We recognise our obligations and responsibilities as an employer and as a major provider of higher education in the community of Suffolk and beyond. We will seek to reflect our commitment to equality and diversity not only in all our activities and in all our dealings with staff, students, but also with members of the public, other agencies and suppliers of services and supplies and we will seek to ask those who work with us to adopt the same approach to their staff, customers etc.

## **2. GOVERNANCE – EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE**

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) provides a forum for the setting of strategy and the governance of EDI workstream activity in the University. Reporting to the Executive and SLT, the EDI committee will oversee agreed priority areas and projects in addition to the review of EDI related data and annual reporting, it also will commission and generate annual reports for the Board and ensure objectives are set in the wider strategy and operating plan.

There shall be a minimum of three meetings of the Committee each year, although the frequency and timing of meetings may be varied with the agreement of the Committee. The EDI committee is chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor or with the Deputy Chair being the responsibility of the Director of People and Organisational Development. Full terms of reference are available from the Chair and will be reviewed annually.

## **3. THE BENEFITS OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

The Equality Act 2010 consolidated nine separate pieces of anti-discrimination legislation into a single Act. The Act identifies and offers protection to people with “protected characteristics”, of which there are nine as referenced above.

A diverse student body and workforce can offer an enriched learning, working and cultural experience and bring a wide range of resources, skills, ideas and energy to the University, providing a competitive edge. Organisations that embrace diversity will reap the benefits of drawing from a wider pool of talent, broaden their markets, improve student success and employee productivity and raise their community profile.

Diversity management can benefit the organisation and its members in a number of ways:

- o Improve opportunities for students and employees to realise their full potential
- o Enrich the overall student experience and prepare graduates for a diverse world of work

- o Improve opportunities within the organisation through internal promotion
- o Utilise the knowledge of different areas of the community
- o Understand market segments and consumer behaviour
- o Become an education provider and employer of choice
- o Have a more representative 'balanced' student body and workforce
- o Value and respect students and employees, attracting and retaining a wider talent pool

#### **4. FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION**

Unlawful discrimination may take different forms, all of which are prohibited at the University. These are described in more detail below:

##### **Direct Discrimination**

Direct unlawful discrimination will occur where, in like for like circumstances, a person is treated, or would have been treated, less favourably than others on the grounds of a protected characteristic.

In very limited circumstances it will be lawful for an employer to treat people differently if there exists a "genuine occupational reason". Where there is a genuine requirement for a particular type of person to do the job, the employer must be able to justify a sound business reason for this.

##### **Associative Discrimination**

Associative discrimination is discrimination against a person because they may have an association with someone with a protected characteristic.

An example might be a non-disabled student or employee who is discriminated against because s/he needs to care for a disabled dependent.

##### **Perceptive Discrimination**

Perceptive discrimination is discrimination against a person because the discriminator thinks the person possesses that characteristic, even if they do not.

##### **Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination occurs when a policy or practice applies to everybody, but the policy or practice has a disproportionate impact on people with a protected characteristic.

##### **Harassment**

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".

Students or staff can complain of harassment even if they do not possess the protected characteristic or if the harassment is not directed at them.

Harassment (or bullying) may take many forms. For instance, it may be in the form of unwanted remarks, inappropriate jokes or ridicule, unwelcome physical contact, shunning or segregation; it may be an isolated incident or a series of incidents.

Complaints about harassment can be pursued through the University of Suffolk Dignity at Study Policy (students) or through the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy and/or grievance policy (staff). When the

University considers it appropriate to do so, alleged harassers may be the subject of the relevant University of Suffolk Disciplinary Procedures.

### **Victimisation**

Victimisation occurs where a person is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, or because they are suspected of doing so. This protection does not apply to anyone who has maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

## **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Everyone at the University of Suffolk has a duty to uphold and promote the values and principles set out in this policy.

All members of the University community (staff, students, visitors and associates) are expected to adhere to the standards, principles and duties of this policy.

All staff are required to undertake the training and development needed to help them do so.

Managers have a duty to act as role models regarding this policy, and to ensure staff adhere to the policy and are given the opportunity to develop the necessary skills and understanding.

The University of Suffolk Executive has a duty to monitor equality of opportunity among its workforce and in the application of relevant policies and practices. The Executive is supported in this work by the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which is chaired by the DVC/Director of People and Organisational Development.

## **6. TRAINING**

The University is committed to ensuring staff and Union representatives receive information and training to enable them to understand their obligations regarding equality and diversity. The format, frequency and objectives of training will be tailored to reflect the needs of staff. Some training is undertaken on a voluntary basis, whereas some is compulsory to ensure staff can carry out their roles within the law.

## **7. MONITORING**

The University monitors the diversity of its student body and its workforce, as well as the effects of its policies and processes (such as recruitment, progression). To do this we collect personal data, which is treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as incorporated and amended. Such data is reported in a way that protects people's identity. Information collected in this way informs our Equality Objectives and is reported annually to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the Joint Negotiating Committee (JCC) and the Executive, as well as to the University of Suffolk Board. Equality data is also published annually on our website.

## **8. SOURCES OF HELP AND INFORMATION**

The University operates a range of policies and procedures that underpin our commitment to equality and diversity.

Students who are concerned that they may be the subject of discrimination are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their tutor or with a member of Student Life or the Students' Union.

Staff who are concerned that they may be the subject of discrimination, or who are uncertain about their obligations in this respect, are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their line manager.

## **9. COMPLAINTS**

Students wishing to make a complaint about matters concerning their studentship should refer to the Dignity at Study Policy and are encouraged to speak to their tutor or Dean of School, or to a member of Student Life or the Students' Union.

Staff wishing to make a complaint about matters concerning their employment should refer to the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy and/or grievance policy (staff). and are encouraged to speak to their line manager, or to refer to the University's Grievance Procedure.

### **[Equality Impact Assessment](#)**