

Equal Opportunities Policy

The Equal Opportunities Policy was established on 11.3.08 and has been updated to reflect the introduction of the Equality Act (2010) and the subsequent updating of University nomenclature.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University promotes acceptance of equal opportunity for all. Therefore, in support of this ideal, this policy does not actively identify individual groups.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 The Teesside University is committed to equality of opportunity within a diverse learning and working environment. In accordance with the Mission Statement, the University will introduce policies and practices that support a working and learning environment free from unfair or unlawful discrimination, for all its staff, students and associates.
- 2.2 Higher Education is available to all sections of society and the University believes it has a duty to ensure that its full range of educational provision is accessible to all members of the community. Applications will be actively encouraged and welcomed from all those seeking to undertake a University course of study.
- 2.3 The University is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity within a diverse environment for all its employees, and will ensure that its policies and procedures are equally applied to all staff. Appropriate monitoring of activities is undertaken, ensuring the development of related policies and practices, and the equal and fair treatment of such individuals. The University's Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy will apply to all those seeking employment with the University.
- 2.4 The University believes that individuals should be enabled to achieve their full potential in their role and career progression. Within the University this means by the provision of appropriate development opportunities and the removal of barriers to enable the achievement of optimum performance. The University community values the following:
- mutual respect and sensitivity;
 - equality of access to the organisation, with equality of esteem and equality of opportunity within the organisation;
 - continuous improvement of individuals stemming from a culture of ongoing review, development and enhancement;
 - satisfaction of individual needs via supportive and flexible working/learning environments;

- encouragement of diversity of views, perspectives, values and issues, but opposition to and eradication of prejudice, unfair barriers and discrimination;
- transparency, equity, responsiveness and accuracy of procedure and process.

2.5 The University will meet the legal obligations under all UK and European legislation, (see Appendix 1).

3. Responsibility

3.1 The Vice-Chancellor and Board of Governors have ultimate responsibility for the effective development and implementation of the University's Equal Opportunities Policy, related policies and procedures, and for ensuring compliance with relevant legislation.

3.2 The formulation of policies and procedures will be the responsibility of the University Secretary and Registrar through the Equal Opportunities Committee reporting to the University Corporate Executive Team.

3.3 The Director of Human Resources (staff) and the Director of Student Services (students) will have responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation, operation and monitoring of all appropriate policies/procedures across the University.

3.4 Deans of Schools and Directors of Departments will be responsible for the implementation of policies within their School/Department.

3.5 All members of staff and students are required to comply with the University's policies and procedures, and with relevant legal requirements. Any incidents identified as unjustifiable or unlawful discrimination will lead to the invoking of the staff or student grievance or disciplinary procedures.

3.6 It is the responsibility of the University to ensure that any individual associated with the University is made aware of all University policies, procedures and practices.

4. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

4.1 The commitment to acceptance of opportunity and to equality of diversity is a continuing process involving the establishment of policies and procedures to promote good practice, identifying and communicating those areas of good practice and setting goals to ensure that implementation is maintained.

4.2 The University will ensure that staff, students and prospective staff/students are informed of the Equal Opportunities Policy and associated policies and procedures.

For staff, a copy of the Policy is included on the University Intranet. For students, reference to the Policy will be made in the Student Charter, the Student Handbook and a full copy will be available via the University Website.

Attention will also be drawn to the Policy, and related policies, at all staff and student Induction Sessions.

- 4.3 The University will provide appropriate Equal Opportunities and Diversity Awareness training for staff and students. Staff development programmes will be provided initially for Directors, Heads of Units and Senior Managers with the aim that this knowledge is disseminated and put into practice throughout the organisation. Equal Opportunities training will also be provided as part of the Recruitment and Selection training, for staff designated as admission tutors and for all new staff as part of their induction.
- 4.4 The University will monitor a wide range of its activities providing statistical analysis, for assessment at the Equal Opportunities Committee. These will include:

Staff:

Recruitment and selection
Promotion
Staff development
Staff seeking programmes of academic study
Turnover
Appropriateness of supportive infrastructure
Level and resolution of all unfair or unlawful discrimination issues

Students:

Assessment
Admissions
Progression and level of achievement
Curriculum Development
Turnover
Appropriateness of supportive infrastructure
Level and resolution of all unfair or unlawful discrimination issues

Pilot areas may be monitored initially to establish effective practice.

Monitoring will not be an end in itself but will produce information to be used in planning and decision-making processes to:

- identify and promote good practice;
- identify any issues or barriers to promoting equality of opportunity and the acceptance of diversity;
- identify action to be taken to address disparities.

Monitoring processes will themselves be regularly reviewed.

- 4.5 The Director of Human Resources (for staff), and Director of Student Services (for students), will submit Annual reports to the Equal Opportunities Committee and the University Corporate Executive Team identifying achievements and areas of good practice across the University. This will include:
- details of methodologies for consulting on, assessing and monitoring, current and new functions and policies;
 - a summary of the outcomes of such consultation, assessment and monitoring;
 - clarification of the available options for future improvement;

- confirmation of the options chosen by the University;
- updating on progress to date, and objectives for the future.

This will be publicised on the University Website (with provision in alternative format to students, staff and other interested parties, where access to the Website is not available).

- 4.6 This Policy and related policies and procedures will be reviewed at least every three years, but will be subject to continuous monitoring.

5. Marketing and Publicity

- 5.1 The University is committed to widening access by students from a broad and diverse range of backgrounds and will offer opportunities to those who have the ability and motivation to benefit from higher education.

- 5.2 Through its marketing, publicity and student recruitment activities, the University aims to generate interest, awareness and ultimately, applications from the widest possible group of individuals. This includes developing and supporting a wide range of activities aimed at recruiting students from groups identified as being under-represented within the University or Higher Education in general.

- 5.3 In support of this, the University will continue to monitor and assess its role in both the local, national and international community, as a higher education provider and employer, to ensure that equality of opportunity and the support of diversity is promoted and practised.

6. Access and Admissions

- 6.1 Consistent with its commitment to ensuring that its full range of educational provision is accessible to all members of the community, the University will work to ensure that entry requirements for admission to courses are appropriate and necessary, and that where possible, non-traditional entry routes are recognised.

- 6.2 It will set in place procedures that take into account individual candidates capabilities, based on a full assessment of their skills and prior experience. The University will provide staff development to assist in the recognition of skills acquired in non-traditional ways. The University will provide access to progression and development at all levels.

- 6.3 The University will seek to ensure that applicants are supported in making appropriate decisions and arrangements that enable them to meet their domestic and personal needs whilst studying. It will endeavour, where possible, to provide flexible opportunities for study and seek, through the provision of information, advice and direct support, to address barriers to participation.

7. Staff Recruitment

- 7.1 The University will actively promote its support of equality of opportunity and diversity in its recruitment advertising, and where appropriate, will use minority group and specialist publications/methods, to reach as wide an audience as possible. The University will apply its Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy to all recruitment and selection processes, ensuring a fair and equitable treatment of all applicants.
- 7.2 It will actively encourage the recruitment of a diverse staff population, by offering support services and advice, together with a flexible and supportive approach to working arrangements.
- 7.3 In line with its policy supporting the encouragement of widening participation, the University will welcome applications from candidates who have qualifications/skills acquired in non-traditional ways, and will provide staff development to support continuing progression within the University.

8. Curriculum Development and Delivery

- 8.1 **Programme Design and Monitoring:** The University operates a continual process of approval and review for all its programmes, ensuring that key issues and agenda are addressed in the design and delivery of the learning experience. Guidelines and checklists will be reviewed annually with particular focus on equality of opportunity.
- 8.2 **Staff Development:** Staff new to teaching may be required to undertake the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching, which will include consideration of staff and student diversity in its programme design, teaching and assessment. The University will address equal opportunity issues via specific guidance materials for programme teams, and in workshops aimed at key staff involved in the design and delivery of first year programmes.
- 8.3 **Specialist Support Mechanisms:** The University provides a wide range of support mechanisms as a part of its Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, which will be subject to review and enhancement in line with the development of the University's programmes, taking account of equality of opportunity and diversity. These include, 'Drop-in tutor' support, specific induction for mature students and international students, Special Needs Co-ordinators, and the provision of Summer College/University programmes.
- 8.4 **Dissemination of Good Practice:** The University's Learning and Teaching Website, the Annual Learning and Teaching Conference, and its Learning Research Forum will be used to disseminate good practice in equality and diversity issues relating to the design and delivery of the learning experience.

9. Language Use

- 9.1 The University is committed to developing an atmosphere of mutual respect, co-operation and tolerance, and acknowledges the power of language in shaping perceptions and attitudes. Language in any form (written, verbal,

sign-language or slogans etc) should be used sensitively and accurately, ensuring that all members of the University community are afforded equal respect. To this end, the University recognises the following:

- any form of communication should be made with the premise that recipients have diverse needs, ensuring that sensitivity is demonstrated to avoid offending, patronising or excluding any member of a group;
- generalisations, stereotyping and categorising people on the basis of a characteristic should be avoided. The University seeks to recognise people as individuals, challenging assumptions, to ensure inclusion and involvement for all;
- all language should be as clear as possible, avoiding excessive jargon or terminology;
- the University recognises that individuals are responsible for their own use of language, but expects line managers to advise their staff as to the appropriateness of their use of language;
- incidents of language misuse should be reported in the first instance to the line manager, who will be responsible for the investigation and verification of the incident;
- where appropriate the University may implement its complaints or harassment procedure when cases of the misuse of language are demonstrated as giving grounds for such action.

9.2 The University recognises that the use of subject specific vocabulary is unavoidable (i.e. health terms, law etc) and as such may be applied within the context of the course content.

10. Equality Legislation

Duties of the University

10.1 General Duty: The Equality Duty consists of a general duty which requires the University to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- advance equality of opportunity;
- foster good relations between people from different groups.

10.2 Specific Duties: The Act has also imposed specific duties on the University in relation to:

- publication of information
- equality objectives

- manner of publication

10.3 **Strategy/Action Plan:** The University will continue to encourage a culture of promoting equality, and will comply with its legal requirements, by formulating an Equality Strategy/Action Plan. The Strategy will incorporate the following:

- a) **Timetable for Action:** There will be a realistic timetable for assessing, prioritising and reviewing current functions and policies for their effect on equality, and for taking any necessary corrective action. The Act requires that all functions around service delivery and employment, but not those around internal management, must be considered. However, the University reserves its right to consider any of its functions, to promote good practice.
- b) **Targets:** Institutional and local targets will be set where appropriate, in consultation with managers and staff, to encourage progress. Targets:
 - may be of representation or parity;
 - will be realistic and achievable but challenging;
 - will relate to stage-by-stage as well as final achievements;
 - will be reviewed in the light of monitoring and experience.
- c) **Positive Action:** Positive Action will be used, where appropriate, to address issues, but will be reviewed regularly for continuing justification.
- d) **Consultation:** The University community (staff and students) will be consulted, wherever reasonable and practicable, through mechanisms such as the Students Union, Trades Union consultations, surveys, questionnaires and discussion groups.
- e) **Action Planning:** The Strategy will have the following action planning elements:
 - Identification of issue
 - Action to be taken
 - Deadline
 - Responsibility for achieving action
 - Resources
 - Performance measures
 - Review mechanisms

Legal Requirements/Acts/Legislation and Reference

The Equality Act came into force on 1st October 2010 and replaced previous anti-discrimination legislation including:

- the Equal Pay Act 1970;
- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975;
- the Race Relations Act 1976;
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- the Equality Act 2006, part 2
- the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003;
- the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003;
- the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006;
- the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007).

The Equality Act aims to harmonise the various discrimination strands which developed under previous legislation.

The protected characteristics under the Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Act prohibits seven different types of discrimination in relation to the protected characteristics:

- Direct discrimination
- Associative discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Harassment
- Harassment by a third party
- Victimisation
- Discrimination by perception.

The Equality Act includes a Public Sector Equality Duty consisting of a General Duty and Specific Duties. The General Duty has three aims:

1. To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
2. To advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
3. To foster good relations between people from different groups.

There are also three specific duties involving:

- publication of information
- equality objectives
- manner of publication.