

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

For use in:	All Colleges/Schools/Departments/Divisions of the University
For use by:	All staff, students, visitors and those contracted to work at or for the University.
Owner:	The University of Leicester
Dates of Trade Union Consultation:	Throughout development
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1. Purpose of Policy

1.1. The purpose of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy ('the Policy') is to:

- Set out the University's legal obligations, ethical and moral responsibilities, and its commitment to an inclusive, fair and equitable University environment.
- Seek to ensure that all members of the University community are treated equitably and are not treated less favourably on the grounds of any of the nine characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010:
 - age;
 - disability;
 - gender reassignment;
 - marriage and civil partnership;
 - pregnancy and maternity;
 - race;
 - religion or belief;
 - sex;
 - sexual orientation.
- Promote inclusive practice and positive attitudes towards inclusivity and valuing diversity.
- Articulate the University's expectations regarding our responsibilities to adhere to and uphold the Policy.

1.2. The policy has been informed by the relevant legislative framework, guidance and established best practice.

2. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement

2.1. The University's vision is to be a truly inclusive university where all members of our community are valued, have a voice, feel a strong sense of belonging, and can thrive to reach their full potential.

2.2. We are committed to maintaining a learning, working, and research, environment characterised by dignity and respect, where everyone is treated in a fair and equitable way, with equity of opportunity, outcomes and experiences, and which is free from discrimination and harassment; an environment where we actively recognise and challenge structural inequities and exclusion, and where we value and celebrate the diversity of our university and local community.

2.3. All members of the University community are expected to contribute to creating this environment, and have a responsibility to adhere to this Policy and the related policies outlined in the [Dignity and Respect at Leicester Framework](#), including the [Dignity and Respect at Leicester Policy](#) and the [Personal Relationships Policy](#).

2.4. Staff and students, particularly those in positions of authority, have a responsibility for leading by example, challenging unacceptable behaviour appropriately, and guiding others to do the same.

2.5. Unacceptable actions or behaviours of staff, students or third parties, defined in [Dignity and Respect Definitions](#) and [Senate Regulation 11](#), may lead to dismissal, termination of studies or termination of contractual arrangements, respectively, from the University.

3. Scope of Policy

- 3.1. The Policy applies to all students, staff and visitors, and those contracted to work at, or on behalf of, the University.
- 3.2. For staff, the Policy applies to all employed staff and those contracted to work at, or for, the University, wherever they are located. This includes those with Unitemps and honorary contracts, consultants, those with 'Visitor' status, Visiting Professors, and Fellows, and those engaged via agencies.
- 3.3. The Policy applies to all registered students of the University, from initial registration through to completion of their programme of study.
- 3.4. It applies to staff and students on and off the University's premises, including 'out of working hours', and during all University-related activities. For students this includes periods of off-campus study and work experience.
- 3.5. It also applies to online and social media activity (please see the University's [Social Media Guidelines](#)) by staff and students at any time either (i) for work purposes eg the use of University social media accounts or (ii) in their personal capacity where they, or the content of the post, can be linked to the University or their connection with the University.
- 3.6. The Policy also applies to how the University will treat any prospective student or prospective member of staff through the outreach, admissions and recruitment processes.
- 3.7. The principles of the Policy should be followed by any visitors, contractors and subcontractors, and it is the responsibility of the person or department engaging with external individuals or agencies to make them aware of the expectations of this Policy.

4. EDI and Freedom of Speech

- 4.1. As outlined in its Code of Practice Concerning Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, the University of Leicester is required by the Higher Education Act (Freedom of Speech) 2023 ('the Act') to take steps that are reasonably practicable, in order to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law.
- 4.2. Freedom of speech and academic freedom are fundamental to ensuring the necessary environment for the pursuit of knowledge, for advancing new ideas, encouraging vigorous debate and challenging conventional wisdom, all of which are part of our core mission.

- 4.3. Freedom of speech and academic freedom are permitted unless restricted by law and may include lawful speech (and other forms of communication as outlined above in 3.5) that include controversial or unpopular ideas, that some may find hurtful, upsetting or offensive.
- 4.4. In securing freedom of speech and academic freedom, the University must, however, ensure that it fully complies with all equity related legislation. This includes the provisions around discrimination and harassment, laid out clearly in the 2010 Equality Act (including the Public Sector Duty), the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 1986 and the Public Order Act 1986, relating to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 4.5. The University of Leicester fully recognises:
- the rights of its academic staff to academic freedom within the law and the rights of all of its students, staff and all other members of the University to freedom of speech within the law. It also recognises the key role that freedom of speech plays in a democratic society and the importance of academic freedom in our own university context.
 - the rights of students, staff and all other members of the University to a private life within the law.
- 4.6. However, action may be taken by the University under its relevant procedures in relation to conduct and actions which breach this Policy, and/or the Dignity and Respect Policy and the expected standards of behaviour outlined in it, including conduct and actions outside of work or study where these impact on members of our university community in the ways set out in this Policy, and in the Dignity and Respect Policy and associated Definitions or where these behaviours damage the reputation of the University.
- 4.7. This policy, and the Dignity and Respect Policy, aim to balance rights of freedom of speech, and academic freedom, within the law with the rights of others, including their own rights to freedom of speech and academic freedom within the parameters of the University's Policy framework.
- 4.8. When considering complaints, grievances or disciplinary action in relation to a breach of the Policy, the University shall consider whether the conduct in question is within the scope of the person's freedom of speech within the law and/or academic freedom within the law, and/or (where relevant) the lawful expression of their protected beliefs under the Equality Act 2010. Where that is considered to be the case, the exercise of those freedoms shall not of itself lead to any disciplinary sanction or other penalty.
- 4.9. The principles of the Policy should be followed by any visitors, contractors and subcontractors, and it is the responsibility of the person or department engaging with external individuals or agencies to make them aware of the expectations of this policy.

5. General Principles

- 5.1. The Policy is supported by the [University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#), which sets out priorities to proactively eliminate disadvantage and promote inclusivity, and which underpins the [University's 10-year Strategy](#).
- 5.2. We adhere to an evidence-based approach to inform equity, diversity and inclusion planning and activities, through data collection, monitoring and analysis.
- 5.3. We adopt a range of flexible approaches to hear the voices of our diverse staff and student community, and in particular the lived experiences of marginalised and minoritised groups, to inform our activities and advance equity and inclusion.
- 5.4. We seek to acknowledge, recognise, challenge and take action to tackle systemic and institutional inequities.
- 5.5. The University complies with its legal responsibilities in carrying out both the general and specific [public sector equality duties](#).
- 5.6. We work to ensure that all members, and prospective members, of our university community are treated fairly and are not subjected to unlawful discrimination on the basis of their protected characteristic(s).
- 5.7. We encourage traditionally disadvantaged, marginalised and under-represented students and staff groups to participate in public university life.
- 5.8. We make [reasonable adjustments for staff](#) and students in accordance with identified needs, wherever possible. The University recognises its anticipatory duty in relation to students and visitors, and the benefits that this can also bring to others, and endeavours to make such proactive adjustments as are reasonable and feasible, in a timely manner.
- 5.9. We conduct equality analysis to consider the impact of our policies and practices on protected groups to identify potential and/or actual adverse impacts and solutions to mitigate these. Equality analysis is embedded in our decision making and approval processes.
- 5.10. The University collects, stores, monitors and publishes equalities information appropriately, whilst protecting the confidentiality of personal information.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- 6.1. **All students, staff, contractors and visitors** have a collective responsibility relating to equity, and to shape and determine our environment and culture.
- 6.2. **All students, staff and contractors** are accountable and responsible for:
 - Upholding the Policy, and the related Dignity and Respect at Leicester Policy and Framework;
 - Treating others with fairness, equity and inclusion;
 - Reporting and challenging unacceptable behaviours and inequities in a safe way. (See Section 7.3)

6.3. Managers and academic leads are accountable and responsible for:

- Ensuring that students and staff are treated fairly and encouraged and enabled to reach their full potential;
- Ensuring that procedures relating to staff and student recruitment, education and award, development, reward and discipline are carried out in accordance with the statutory duties to promote equity and eliminate discrimination;
- Fostering a culture in which equity and diversity considerations are embedded into their area's service provision and practice;
- Demonstrating and promoting fairness and inclusion in their own behaviour and decision making in all aspects of their role;
- Identifying and addressing systemic inequities in their area's policy and practice;
- Dealing with reports and complaints fairly and promptly;
- Proactively developing and maintaining up to date competence in equity and inclusion practice relevant to their role;
- Ensuring that students and staff are aware of the Policy and how to report complaints, such as in relation to bullying, harassment and unfair treatment, and are signposted to available advice and support.

6.4. The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team is accountable and responsible for:

- Leading and supporting the University in creating a fair, inclusive and diverse environment;
- Supporting and guiding the University in meeting its statutory responsibilities, including fulfilling its Public Duty under the 2010 Equality Act, which includes annual equality information reporting, embedding equality analysis, monitoring and consultation;
- Ensuring an effective policy and provision infrastructure is in place to support the University in meeting its legal responsibilities and fulfilling its EDI Strategy;
- Providing advice, guidance and support on the application of the Policy;
- Providing advice and guidance to colleagues relating to equity and inclusion for staff and students.

6.5. The University Executive Board is accountable and responsible for:

- Ensuring that the University meets its legal obligations relating to equity;
- Ensuring that equality analysis, including relevant consultation, is carried out on all senior-level proposed policies and decisions, where appropriate;
- Challenging systemic and institutional inequities;
- Leading the University's compliance with the Policy.

7. Linked Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Legal Framework

7.1. The Policy should be read in conjunction with [Dignity and Respect at Leicester Policy and Framework](#), [Senate Regulation 11](#) (students) and other relevant University of Leicester policies, procedures and guidelines, as necessary.

7.2. The [Equality Act 2010](#) and [Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

7.3. The [University of Leicester EDI Strategy](#)

8. Breach of Policy

- 8.1. The University takes seriously any instances of non-adherence to the Policy by students, staff, contractors or visitors.
- 8.2. Instances of non-adherence will be investigated, where appropriate, and such instances may be considered under the relevant policy and procedures, including, but not limited to the [Discipline Ordinance Policy and Procedure](#) for staff and [Senate Regulation 11](#) governing student conduct and discipline.
- 8.3. Staff and students can seek support and disclose unacceptable behaviours, including discrimination and victimisation, at [Report and Support](#).
- 8.4. Staff and students have routes to make complaints, including through the [Grievance Ordinance](#) (for staff) and [Student Complaints process](#) (for students) respectively.

9. Equality Analysis

- 9.1. The policy has been subject to equality analysis and will be monitored and reviewed every three years.
- 9.2. Equality analysis included consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including student and staff equity groups, EDI Governance Structure, Students' Union and our recognised Trade Unions.