

## Equality and Diversity Policy

### Statement of Purpose

The University of Stirling is committed to creating and sustaining a positive, stimulating and supportive working environment for our staff, and an excellent teaching and learning experience which encourages our students to thrive academically and personally.

As an employer and a provider of education, we strongly value the diversity of our staff and students. We aim to create an environment and culture where staff and students are equally valued and respected, where diversity is celebrated, and where our staff and students are able to achieve their full potential, to contribute fully, and to derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in the life of the University. We recognise that the promotion of equality and diversity is fundamental to good governance and management practices, and that this principle will support the University to achieve its strategic priorities and outcomes, as set out in the institutional *Strategic Plan 2011-2016* and future strategic objectives.

### Key principles of the policy

The key principles upon which this policy is based are:

- **Equity** – *We believe in and encourage fair and equitable treatment for all our staff, students, and users of our services.*
- **Diversity** - *We consider the diversity of our staff, students and alumni to be one of our greatest assets.*
- **Respect and tolerance** – *All our staff and students deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of background or personal characteristics.*
- **Excellence** – *We believe that individual and institutional excellence can only be achieved through recognising the value of every individual and encouraging them to achieve their potential.*
- **Inclusion and accessibility** – *Staff and students should have the opportunity to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from the services and successes of the University, without experiencing unnecessary barriers caused by the presence or otherwise of a protected characteristic.*

## Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation

The University does not tolerate harassment, victimisation or unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of age, caring responsibility, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other irrelevant characteristic, and is committed to working with our diverse University community in a wholly positive way to embed respect, equity, and inclusion. The University will continue to comply with its statutory duties to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the *Equality Act 2010*. [Appendix I](#) provides a summary of the legal framework.

All staff and students - whether existing or potential - and visitors to the University's campuses should receive fair treatment, whatever their relationship with the University.

## Going beyond tackling discrimination: promoting equality and diversity

The University aims to pay due regard to the principle of equality in relation to all its activities, from decisions on its mission and strategic objectives through to day-to-day operations. As well as taking steps to eliminate discrimination and other unlawful conduct, the University is committed to fulfilling its statutory duties to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic<sup>1</sup> and those who do not.

## Responsibilities

All staff, students, visitors and organisations with which the University has a contractual arrangement are expected to accept and espouse the principles of respect, equality and inclusion, to abide by the University's equality policy, and not to be party to situations which could lead to discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation. In addition:

- **University Court**, the University's governing body, is responsible for the overall fulfilment of the University's statutory equality duties, and thus for the implementation of this policy.
- **Academic Council** is responsible for ensuring that the principles of equality and diversity are embedded into research policy and practices and the learning and teaching environment, and are appropriately integrated into academic regulations and standards.
- **The Equality Steering Group (ESG)** is responsible for overseeing all equality and diversity activities and the implementation of the University's Equality Outcomes (2013 - 2017) and duties set out under the Equality Act, and for providing advice to the University Strategy and Policy Group (USPG) on equality issues affecting the University.
- All **Committees, management groups and working groups** are responsible for paying due regard to this policy and the University's statutory equality duties when making decisions and carrying out their business.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by the Equality Act 2010

- When entering into a **contractual relationship** with any partner or supplier, the University will clearly set out its expectations in respect of equality and diversity.

## Implementation

The University's strategy for equality and diversity is set out in University's Equality Outcomes, which can be downloaded at this link <http://www.stir.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/equalityoutcomes/>. The Outcomes set out priorities for action and are accompanied by our equality outcome action plan. The implementation of the Outcome Agreements is monitored by the ESG.

This policy is also supported by a range of staff and student related policies that underpin a cohesive University-wide approach to equality and diversity including our commitment to Athena Swan and related action plans. Key supporting policies are listed in appendix II.

## Monitoring

The successful implementation of this policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the ESG. Its success will be monitored by considering the results of an ongoing programme of equality impact assessments, the results of regular statistical monitoring, and periodic consultation with staff and students. Progress against our outcomes will be published through a biennial mainstreaming report, annual employee equality report and pay gap report which will be published on our webpages <http://www.stir.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/equalityoutcomes/>.

## Breaches of the equality and diversity policy

Breaches of this policy by any student or member of staff will be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and fairly, and may lead to disciplinary proceedings.

If any **member of staff** considers that this policy has been breached, he or she should contact his or her line manager in the first instance. If the alleged breach relates to bullying or harassment, you may wish to contact one of the University's anti-bullying and harassment contacts for initial advice<sup>2</sup>.

If any **student** considers that this policy has been breached, he or she should contact his or her Personal Tutor or Adviser of Studies in the first instance. All students are allocated an individual Personal Tutor, details are available from each faculty. A list of Advisers in each faculty and details on how to contact them are available on the website at <http://www.stir.ac.uk/tse/advisers/>.

Allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation of any student or member of staff will be taken seriously and will be dealt with appropriately under the relevant procedures.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A list of the anti-bullying and harassment contacts is provided at the web link above.

<sup>3</sup> The University has in place policies and procedures for dealing with instances of bullying, harassment and victimisation as they affect staff and students. Visit the anti bullying and harassment website for further information relating to staff <http://www.hr-services.stir.ac.uk/policies->

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed in response to legislative changes, or every three years.

## **Feedback**

The University welcomes feedback from stakeholders and members of its community. If you have any views on the implementation of this policy, or if you have an equality issue that you want to raise, please let us know. You can do this by emailing [equality@stir.ac.uk](mailto:equality@stir.ac.uk).

## **Further information**

For more information on the University's approach to equality and diversity, visit the equality and diversity web page <http://www.stir.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/> or email [equality@stir.ac.uk](mailto:equality@stir.ac.uk)

## **Endorsement**

This policy was approved by University Court on 12 December 2011 and revisions approved by Equality Steering Group, April 2015. Minor updates August 2016

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[procedures/Anti-BullyingandHarassmentfrontpage.php](#) or visit the Academic Policy and Practice website for further information relating to students <http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/ac-regs/index.php>

### The Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010. The aim of the Act is to reform, harmonise and streamline discrimination law, and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality. The Equality Act replaces all previous UK equality and anti-discrimination legislation with one piece of legislation. The Act applies to employers, service providers, public bodies and providers of education. The University is therefore covered by the Act in a number of roles.

The Act strengthens and extends protection from discrimination to cover nine 'protected characteristics': age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. It continues to outlaw direct discrimination and indirect discrimination<sup>4</sup>, and it extends protection from discrimination to cover *discrimination by association* and *discrimination by perception*. It also extends protection against harassment across most of the protected characteristics.

The Act also introduced a new public sector equality duty. The duty replaces the previous race, gender and disability equality duties, and it applies to all public bodies, including universities and colleges. It places a general duty on public authorities (including universities), when exercising their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- 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

For the purposes of the duty, there are eight protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.) The University must pay due regard to the duty as it relates to these eight characteristics when carrying out all its functions. Note that the first element of the duty (elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation) also covers marital and civil partnership status (the 9<sup>th</sup> protected characteristic.)

The vast majority of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The public sector equality duty and the introduction of extended positive action provisions came into force in 2011. The extension of protection from age discrimination in service provision came into force on 1 October 2012.

For further information on the Equality Act 2010 and what it means for the University and its staff and students, visit the EHRC website

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act>

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<sup>4</sup> Indirect discrimination can sometimes be justifiable if it is shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Direct discrimination is never permissible under the Act.

### **Supporting policies**

The ***Human Resources and Organisation Development***, in partnership with faculties and service directorates, implements a number of policies in relation to:

- Appraisal/Achieving Success
- Adoption
- Anti-bullying and harassment
- Flexible working
- Grievance/disciplinary procedures
- Maternity
- Paternity
- Parental leave
- Grading and re-grading
- Recruitment and selection
- Race equality

<http://www.hr-services.stir.ac.uk/policies-procedures/index.php>

The ***Student Support Service (SSS)*** also implements a number of policies aimed at supporting students with particular needs, including:

- Process and Procedures for supporting disabled students
- Mental health guidelines
- Arrangements for examinations and course work
- Procedures for agreeing adjustments

The SSS website includes a wealth of guidance aimed at supporting disabled students <http://www.stir.ac.uk/student-support/>