

Equality & Diversity Policy

Approved by:	Remuneration & HR Committee	Date:	12 January 2022
Implementation date:	January 2022		
Review date:	January 2023		
Manager responsible:	Director of Finance & Resources		

About this policy

The Falmouth & Exeter Students' Union (The Students' Union) Equality and Diversity Policy is not contractual but sets out The Students' Union commitment to promote equality of opportunity and to eliminate any unlawful or unfair discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, trustees and members of The Students' Union.

This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

Introduction

This policy sets out The Students' Union's commitment to promote equality of opportunity and work and to eliminate any unlawful or unfair discrimination and harassment in the workplace. We are committed to providing equality for all irrespective of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partner status
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race
- Colour
- Nationality
- Ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex or sexual orientation

Under the Equality Act (2010) these are known as 'protected characteristics'.

Policy Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Value diversity and promote equality of opportunity for all.
- Promote respect and encourage good relations within and between groups.
- Aim to meet the different needs of different groups, as appropriate, whilst promoting shared values.
- Promote an inclusive and harmonious place of work where there is mutual respect and where harassment and bullying, intimidation or violence is not tolerated.
- Prevent unlawful discrimination and victimisation.
- Comply with our legal obligations.

The Students' Union will take seriously any breach of this policy.

Policy application

The policy applies to all aspects of staff and student activities within The Students' Union. Everyone is required to promote a culture free from illegal discrimination and all forms of harassment and bullying. Any incidents of discrimination, harassment or bullying will be investigated and may provide grounds for disciplinary action or dismissal.

We will work to ensure that all our students, employees, trustees and visitors, as well as those who apply or seek to apply to work with us, are treated fairly and are not subjected to discrimination by The Students' Union on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics listed above.

The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that this policy is fully implemented. Each manager is accountable for delivering the equality commitments in their areas of responsibility. Trustees and managers will ensure that:

- Staff and Students are aware of the equality and diversity policy and the procedures for making a complaint.
- Equality is taken into consideration in policies, strategies, and procedures to ensure they promote equality and do not unlawfully discriminate.
- Procedures are in place for the fair appointment, promotion and development of staff, free from unjustifiable discrimination.
- Managers and staff are provided with appropriate equality training and development.
- Compliance with the Equality and Diversity Policy is part of the job descriptions of all staff.
- There are sufficient resources in place to implement this policy effectively.

All staff will ensure that:

- They support and implement the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Their behaviour and/or actions do not amount to discrimination or harassment in any way.

Policy Review and Equality Impact Assessments

This policy will be reviewed annually, or in accordance with any change in legislation.

We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives. As part of this process we monitor the composition of job applicants and the benefits and career progression of our staff.

Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the Director of Finance and Resources.

Complaints of Discrimination

The Students' Union will take any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation seriously and they will be dealt with in accordance with agreed procedures.

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure. If you believe that you may have been subject to harassment you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Bullying & Harassment Policy. If you are uncertain which applies or need advice on how to proceed you should speak to your line manager or another appropriate manager, or the Chief Executive Officer.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

Language and Communications

Prejudice and discrimination may arise and be reinforced by our use of language, which may not be neutral and value-free. Words and phrases can be associated with apparently negative attitudes and may unwittingly give offence to people including members of groups that are subject to prejudice, harassment or discrimination.

Everyone is expected to seek to ensure that their written, spoken and electronically transmitted or published material does not contain language or images that may knowingly cause offence to others. Rather than be prescriptive about the use of language, staff are asked to exercise good judgement and be aware of common, or inappropriate, or offensive references in relation to the protected characteristics.

Social Networking

In accordance with The Students' Union Social Media Policy, staff are expected to exercise caution and good judgement when using social media and are not expected to use language or images which may be inflammatory or discriminatory or which may constitute harassment and bullying or victimisation.

Working Conditions

The Students' Union will take account of the needs of the individual members of staff and wherever reasonably practicable will use flexitime or flexible working to assist with issues such as religious observance and caring for dependants, in line with the relevant legislation.

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your line manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

Staff Development

The Students' Union will not discriminate on any grounds in the provision of training and development to assist staff to perform their jobs more effectively. Staff will be provided with, and expected to undertake, appropriate development to enable them to implement the Equality and Diversity Policy. Training and Development will be recorded and monitored.

Termination of Employment

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

Recruitment and Selection

All appropriate qualified candidates will be given equal consideration during the recruitment process and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics.

Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. They should include an appropriate short policy statement on equal opportunities and a copy of this policy shall be sent on request to those who enquire about vacancies.

We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market.

An Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form will be sent with all application packs. Information on this form will not be used in the selection process and will only be used for monitoring purposes. In addition, The Students' Union HR will anonymise candidate applications and replace candidate names with A, B, C, D and so on.

Selection criteria for all posts will be clearly defined and reflected in the Job Description and Person Specification.

Short listing and interviewing processes will be thorough and carried out objectively and without illegal discrimination and always include more than one person.

All staff involved in these processes will be appropriately trained in recruitment and selection and be aware of relevant employment legislation.

Whenever possible, recruitment panels will include a mix of genders.

Applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used with Human Resources approval.

Applicants should not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants should not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment. There are limited exceptions in law.

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

The Students' Union welcomes applications from suitably qualified people and will make reasonable adjustments to the selection process and to the workplace and working arrangements to accommodate successful disabled candidates.

Forms of Discrimination (Equality Act 2010)

The legal definitions vary, but broadly speaking discrimination can occur either directly or indirectly.

Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not “fit in” would be direct discrimination.

Indirect Discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else’s complaint.