EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION POLICY

Brief Description (max 50 words)	This document is divided into two parts: the Policy Statement, which sets out the university's principles and commitments, and the Procedural Guidance, which explains how those commitments are put into practice.
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Equality Impact Assessment [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy EIA.pdf](Equality,%20Diversity%20&%20Inclusion%20Policy%20EIA.pdf)	This document has been assessed for equality impact on the protected groups, as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This Policy is applicable as outlined in the 'scope' irrespective of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage, or civil partnership.

Amendment History

Version	Date	Reviewer Name(s)	Summary of changes
2.3	July 25	Ataylia Clarke	Update of template

Contents

This document is divided into two parts: the Policy Statement, which sets out the university's principles and commitments, and the Procedural Guidance, which explains how those commitments are put into practice.

This policy does not form part of employees' contract of employment and the University reserves the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Part 1: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy Statement

1. Introduction

At the University of Suffolk, our organisational values –being inclusive, empowering, collaborative, creative, professional, and transformative – are not just statements of intent; they shape the way we work, learn and lead.

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy exists to help bring those values to life. It provides a framework to ensure that fairness, dignity, and respect are embedded in every aspect of university life – from the way we recruit and support staff, to how we teach, learn, and engage with our communities.

It outlines the university's commitments to equality, the legal framework we operate within, and the behaviours and responsibilities expected of all members of our community.

Definitions of key EDI terms can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all members of the University of Suffolk community, including: staff, students, job applicants, contractors, casual workers, volunteers, interns, apprentices, and visitors.

3. Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity for all
- Foster good relations between individuals from different backgrounds
- Embed EDI into every aspect of university life

4. Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The University of Suffolk is committed to creating an inclusive environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and able to thrive. We actively promote equality of access and opportunity and take deliberate steps to prevent and address discrimination in all its forms.

We foster a culture where difference is not only respected, but recognised as a source of strength, innovation, and insight. This includes visible and non-visible aspects of identity, such as neurodiversity, disability, culture, and lived experience.

5. The Benefits of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

A diverse and inclusive university benefits everyone. When people feel respected and able to be themselves, they are more likely to contribute fully, learn effectively, and thrive.

Embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion:

- Enhances staff and student wellbeing and sense of belonging

- Supports innovation, critical thinking, and collaborative working

- Strengthens decision-making by drawing from a wider range of perspectives

- Attracts and retains diverse talent

- Helps prepare students for success in a global and interconnected world

This policy supports the university's mission to be transformative, inclusive, and empowering – not only in what we do, but in how we do it.

6. Legal Framework and Definitions

We are guided by the Equality Act 2010 which defines nine protected characteristics:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex; and
- Sexual orientation.

Definitions of these characteristics are provided in Appendix 2.

7. Forms of Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 defines several types of discrimination that are unlawful. All are prohibited at the university.

Direct discrimination – Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination – A policy or practice that applies to everyone but disadvantages people with a particular protected characteristic.

Associative discrimination – Discrimination because of a person's association with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Indirect associative discrimination - When a policy or practice that applies to everyone puts someone at a disadvantage because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic.

Perceived discrimination – Discrimination based on the belief that someone has a protected characteristic, regardless of whether they actually do.

Harassment – Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment.

Victimisation – Treating someone unfairly because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination.

Further guidance, examples, and support are available through the university's Bullying and Harassment Policy and the Dignity at Study Policy.

8. Responsibilities

All members of the university have a responsibility to uphold the principles of this policy. Managers and leaders must model inclusive behaviour and ensure their teams do the same. The Executive is accountable for monitoring compliance and progress.

8.1 Responsibilities of University Managers

University managers and academic leaders are expected to demonstrate inclusive leadership and actively foster a culture that reflects the university's commitments to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

They are responsible for:

1) Modelling respectful and inclusive behaviour, and setting clear expectations of conduct in line with university policies
2) Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into everyday team dynamics, decision-making, and outputs — fulfilling their Public Sector Equality Duty.
3) Creating psychologically safe environments where staff and students feel confident to raise concerns and challenge inappropriate behaviour.
4) Taking timely and appropriate action to address bullying, harassment, and victimisation, in accordance with relevant policies and the Equality Act 2010.

5) Ensuring recruitment, progression, performance, grievance, and disciplinary procedures are fair, inclusive, and compliant with equality legislation.
6) Supporting inclusive curriculum design, teaching, assessment, and student experience practices that promote equity and reduce disadvantage.
7) Enabling staff and students to reach their potential regardless of background or protected characteristic.
8) Ensuring reasonable adjustments are identified and implemented for staff and students in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
9) Conducting or supporting Equality Impact Assessments where relevant to policy or operational decisions.

These responsibilities apply to all teams and areas under their leadership and management.

8.2 Responsibilities of All Staff

All staff at the university have a shared responsibility to support and uphold this policy. Staff are expected to:

1) Act in accordance with the aims of this policy and the university's values.
2) Use their influence to promote fairness, inclusion and opportunity for colleagues and students.
3) Contribute to a culture where diversity is valued, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
4) Take action where appropriate, including reporting discrimination, harassment or victimisation to a line manager, People, Organisation & Development (POD) team, or another designated contact, or taking safe and appropriate action to challenge inappropriate behaviour where they feel able to do so.

8.3 Responsibilities of the People and Organisational Development Team

The POD team plays a key role in embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion across the employee lifecycle. The team is responsible for:

1) Reviewing and updating this policy in line with legislative changes and best practice, in consultation with recognised staff bodies where appropriate.
2) Providing EDI-related advice and guidance to managers, staff, and senior leaders, including on reasonable adjustments, inclusive recruitment, and complex employee relations matters.
3) Collecting, monitoring, and reporting diversity data to support transparency, identify barriers, and inform strategic priorities.
4) Ensuring equality considerations are built into HR and OD policies and practices, including through Equality Impact Assessments.
5) Leading the design and delivery of EDI training, including induction content and targeted development for managers and those involved in recruitment.
6) Promoting a positive, inclusive workplace culture in line with the university's values and EDI commitments.

8.4 Responsibilities of Students

All students are expected to uphold the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Students are responsible for:

1) Acting in accordance with the aims of this policy and relevant university conduct policies.
2) Contributing to a respectful, inclusive community where everyone is treated with dignity.
3) Reporting any incidents of discrimination, harassment or victimisation via the University's reporting tools or by seeking advice from Student Services or other designated contacts.
4) Engaging respectfully with others, and, where appropriate, taking respectful action to challenge inappropriate behaviour, where this feels safe, or seeking support from Student Services.

8.5 Responsibilities of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC)

The EDIC supports strategic oversight of equality, diversity, and inclusion. It is responsible for:

1) Monitoring progress against EDI objectives and legal duties
2) Advising on policy and practice
3) Reviewing equality monitoring data and identifying areas for improvement
4) Ensuring that staff and student voices are reflected in institutional priorities

Part 2: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion – Procedural Guidance

9. Governance and Oversight

The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) is responsible for overseeing the university's strategic EDI objectives and reviewing progress against them. The committee reports to the Executive and Board and usually meets two times a year.

10. Embedding EDI in Practice

EDI is embedded in our recruitment practices, curriculum design, line management, professional development, and decision-making processes. We expect all departments to actively consider equality impact in their activities – a Equality Impact Assessment Policy and Procedure exists to support this.

11. Training and Development

The university provides both mandatory and optional EDI training to staff and union representatives. The frequency and objectives of the training are tailored to role and need. Completion of mandatory training is monitored by the POD team and reported to the Executive.

12. Monitoring and Data Use

The university monitors the diversity of its student and staff communities, and the impact of its policies and practices, such as recruitment and progression. These insights help us understand where inequalities may exist and take action to remove systemic or structural barriers.

To support this, we collect personal data in line with UK GDPR. All data is reported in ways that protect individual identity and is used to inform our Equality Objectives.

Disclosure of diversity data is always voluntary. We use this information to understand representation, identify barriers, and improve equity, not to make assumptions about individuals.

Summary reports are submitted annually to the EDI Committee, the Executive, and the Board, and are also published on our website.

13. Raising Concerns

The university recognises that concerns about equality, discrimination or dignity may arise in many forms and encourages both staff and students to raise issues early — whether through informal conversations or more formal channels. Support and advice are available for anyone who is unsure how to proceed.

Staff who experience or witness discrimination, harassment, or other forms of unacceptable behaviour are encouraged to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity. This can be done by speaking with a line manager, a colleague in the POD team, or another trusted contact. The University's Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy and grievance procedures offer further guidance and formal options if needed.

Students who have experienced or witnessed behaviour that concerns them — including discrimination, harassment, or exclusion — are encouraged to raise their concerns as early as possible. Support is available through the Dignity at Study Policy, and students can speak to their course tutor, Dean of School, a member of the Student Life team, or the Students' Union. These conversations can be informal or lead to more formal processes, depending on what feels appropriate.

14. Related Policies and Further Information

This policy should be read in conjunction with related documents such as the Recruitment and Selection Policy, Grievance Procedure, Reasonable Adjustments Guidance, Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy, and Dignity at Study Policy, Equality Impact Assessment Policy, and Procedure.

15. Support and Resources

The university is committed to ensuring that all staff and students can access support to address challenges and thrive in an inclusive environment.

Available resources include:

- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Student Assistance Programme (SAP):** Each programme offers free, 24/7 confidential support, including counselling and legal advice. Further information is available via Hub.

- **Staff Diversity Networks:** Peer-led groups for underrepresented and marginalised communities.

- **People and Organisational Development Team:** For guidance on policy, inclusive practice, or reporting concerns.

- **Disability and Wellbeing Services (Students):** Provides reasonable adjustments, mental health support, and accessibility advice.

- **Chaplaincy and Faith Support:** A multi-faith resource for connection, reflection, and inclusive spiritual support.

- **Students' Union:** Provide a range of services to support and improve student's experiences at university. There are also a number of societies providing opportunities for connection and support.

Appendix 1

Key EDI Terms

These terms are frequently used in equality, diversity and inclusion work but are sometimes misunderstood or used interchangeably. The following definitions are provided to support shared understanding and consistent language across the university. They reflect the principles of the Equality Act 2010 as well as the university's values of inclusivity, empowerment, and collaboration.

Equality
Ensuring that individuals are not treated less favourably because of protected characteristics, and that everyone has fair access to opportunities, services, and support. Equality focuses on fairness in process and the removal of discrimination and barriers.

Equity
Recognising that people have different experiences, needs, and starting points. Equity means providing the right support to achieve fair outcomes, which may involve treating people differently to meet their individual circumstances.

Diversity
The presence of difference within a group. This includes both visible and non-visible differences, such as ethnicity, age, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, socio-economic background, and neurodiversity. A diverse environment values and draws on a broad range of perspectives and experiences.

Inclusion
Actively creating environments where everyone feels respected, supported, and able to contribute fully. Inclusion is about more than representation, it means ensuring people are heard, valued, and able to thrive.

Intersectionality
The concept that people's identities and experiences do not exist in isolation. Different aspects of identity — such as race, gender, disability or socio-economic status — can intersect to create overlapping advantages or disadvantages. Recognising intersectionality helps us respond to the complexity of lived experience in a more thoughtful and inclusive way.

Appendix 2

Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 provides protection against discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on nine protected characteristics. These are aspects of identity or circumstance that are legally recognised as requiring protection in a wide range of contexts, including employment, education, and the provision of services. The definitions below are adapted from statutory guidance.

1. Age

Age refers to the number of years a person has lived and applies to people of all ages. Discrimination can occur based on being perceived as too young or too old or belonging to a particular age group (e.g., "young adults" or "over 50s").

2. Disability

A person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial (more than minor or trivial) and long-term (lasting or likely to last 12 months or more) adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes hidden or non-visible disabilities such as autism, ADHD, chronic pain, or mental health conditions. The university recognises and supports neurodivergent individuals as part of its commitment to inclusion and accessibility.

3. Gender Reassignment

This applies to individuals who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex. Legal protection does not depend on medical diagnosis or treatment. It covers binary and non-binary identities where a transition is taking place or intended.

4. Marriage and Civil Partnership

This characteristic applies to people who are legally married or in a registered civil partnership. Marriages and civil partnerships can be between people of the opposite sex and people of the same sex.

5. Pregnancy and Maternity

Pregnancy refers to the condition of being pregnant, and maternity covers the period after birth. In the workplace, this includes statutory maternity leave. Discrimination can occur if someone is treated unfavourably because they are pregnant, have recently given birth, or are breastfeeding.

6. Race

Race includes a person's colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins. It can cover multiple dimensions of identity and applies equally to majority and minority ethnic groups. Racial discrimination can include assumptions based on accent, name, or appearance.

7. Religion or Belief

This covers any religion (such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, etc.), a lack of religion (such as atheism), and philosophical beliefs that meet legal criteria. A philosophical belief must

be genuinely held, relate to a substantial aspect of human life or behaviour, and be worthy of respect in a democratic society.

8. Sex

Sex refers to a person's biological and legal status as male or female. This characteristic protects individuals from sex-based discrimination and harassment. It is distinct from gender identity, which may be covered under gender reassignment.

9. Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both. It includes gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, and other orientations. The law protects individuals from discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Note:

The definitions provided in this appendix are intended to give a clear and accessible overview of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. However, the legal and practical application of these characteristics can be more complex depending on context. Staff are encouraged to seek advice from the POD team and students are encouraged to contact a member of Student Life or the Students' Union if they have questions, need support, or would like guidance on how these characteristics may apply in specific situations.