

# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

## 1. University of Suffolk Equality Policy Statement

We are committed to an inclusive approach to the delivery of Higher Education. We are working to ensure that the University of Suffolk is open and accessible to all those wishing to participate in and capable of benefiting from Higher Education.

We value all of the different people studying and working at the University and we are committed to developing policies and processes and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that tackle inequality and exclusion.

We are wholly committed to protecting people with “protected characteristics”<sup>1</sup> which are:

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

In addition to promoting **equality** of opportunity and equality of access to our services, we will also uphold a principle of **diversity** throughout the institution. Diversity adds another dimension to the equality agenda, by making sure that the **differences** between people, groups and identities are understood, valued and respected. Managing diversity is about improving how people can study or work together by recognising and valuing their similarities *and* differences.

We recognise our obligations and responsibilities as an employer and as a major provider of higher education in the community of Suffolk and beyond. We will seek to reflect our commitment to equality and diversity in all our activities and in all our dealings with staff, students, members of the public, other agencies and suppliers of services and supplies.

## 2. The Benefits of Diversity Management

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<sup>1</sup> The Equality Act 2010 consolidated nine separate pieces of anti-discrimination legislation into a single Act. The Act identifies and offers protection to people with “protected characteristics”, of which there are nine (see main body of text).

A diverse student body and workforce can offer an enriched learning, working and cultural experience and bring a wide range of resources, skills, ideas and energy to the University, providing a competitive edge. Organisations that embrace diversity will reap the benefits of drawing from a wider pool of talent, broaden their markets, improve student success and employee productivity and raise the community profile.

Diversity management can benefit the organisation and its members in a number of ways:

- Improve opportunities for students to realise their full potential
- Enrich the overall student experience and prepare graduates for a diverse world of work
- Improve opportunities within the organisation through internal promotion
- Utilise the knowledge of different areas of the community
- Understand market segments and consumer behaviour
- Become an education provider and employer of choice
- Have a more representative 'balanced' student body and workforce
- Value and respect students and employees, attracting and retaining a wider talent pool

### **3. Forms of Discrimination**

Unlawful discrimination may take different forms, all of which are prohibited at the University. These are described in more detail below:

#### **3.1 Direct Discrimination**

Direct unlawful discrimination will occur where, in like for like circumstances, a person is treated, or would have been treated, less favourably than others on the grounds of a protected characteristic (see Section 1 above).

In very limited circumstances it will be lawful for an employer to treat people differently if there exists a "genuine occupational reason". Where there is a genuine requirement for a particular type of person to do the job, the employer must be able to justify a sound business reason for this.

#### **3.2. Associative Discrimination**

Associative discrimination is discrimination against a person because they may have an association with someone with a protected characteristic.

An example might be a non-disabled student or employee who is discriminated against because s/he needs to care for a disabled dependent.

#### **3.3 Perceptive Discrimination**

Perceptive discrimination is discrimination against a person because the discriminator thinks the person possesses that characteristic, even if they do not.

#### **3.4. Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination occurs when a policy or practice applies to everybody, but the policy or practice has a disproportionate impact on people with a protected characteristic.

### **3.5 Harassment**

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”.

Students or staff can complain of harassment even if they do not possess the protected characteristic or if the harassment is not directed at them.

Harassment may take many forms. For instance, it may be in the form of unwanted remarks, inappropriate jokes or ridicule, unwelcome physical contact, shunning or segregation; it may be an isolated incident or a series of incidents.

Complaints about harassment can be pursued through the University of Suffolk Dignity At Study Policy (students) or through the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy (staff). When the University considers it appropriate to do so, alleged harassers may be the subject of the relevant University of Suffolk Disciplinary Procedures.

### **3.6 Victimisation**

Victimisation occurs where a person is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, or because they are suspected of doing so. This protection does not apply to anyone who has maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

Everyone at the University of Suffolk has a duty to uphold and promote the values and principles set out in this policy.

All members of the University community (staff, students, visitors and associates) are expected to adhere to the standards, principles and duties of this policy.

All staff are required to undertake the training and development needed to help them do so.

Managers have a duty to act as role models with regard to this policy, and to ensure staff adhere to the policy and are given the opportunity to develop the necessary skills and understanding.

The University of Suffolk Executive has a duty to monitor equality of opportunity among its workforce and in the application of relevant policies and practices. The Executive is supported in this work by the University’s Equality and Diversity Committee, which is chaired by the Director of Human Resources.

## **5. Training**

The University is committed to ensuring staff receive information and training to enable them to understand their obligations with regard to equality and diversity. The format, frequency and objectives of training will be tailored to reflect the needs of

staff. Some training is undertaken on a voluntary basis, whereas some is compulsory to ensure staff can carry out their roles within the law.

## 6. Monitoring

The University monitors the diversity of its student body and its workforce, as well as the effects of its policies and processes (such as recruitment, progression). To do this we collect personal data, which is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Such data is reported in a way that protects people's right to confidentiality. Information collected in this way informs our Equality Objectives and is reported annually to the Equality and Diversity Committee and the Executive, as well as to the University of Suffolk Board. Equality data is also published annually on our website.

## 7. Sources of Help and Information

The University operates a range of policies and procedures that underpin our commitment to equality and diversity. All our agreed policies and procedures are published on our website and on our intranet site.

Students who are concerned that they may be the subject of discrimination are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their tutor or with a member of Student Services or the Students' Union.

Staff who are concerned that they may be the subject of discrimination, or who are uncertain about their obligations in this respect, are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their line manager or with a member of the HR Department.

## 8. Complaints

Comments or complaints about the arrangements described herein should be addressed in writing to the Director of Human Resources at University of Suffolk, Waterfront Building, Neptune Quay, Ipswich, IP4 1QJ.

Students wishing to make a complaint about matters concerning their studentship should refer to the Dignity at Study Policy and are encouraged to speak to their tutor or Head of Department, or to a member of Student Services or the Students' Union.

Staff wishing to make a complaint about matters concerning their employment should refer to the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy and are encouraged to speak to their line manager, or to a member of the HR team, or to refer to the University's Grievance Procedure.

**Director of Human Resources**  
**May 2016**

### Other Sources of Information

ACAS [www.acas.org.co.uk](http://www.acas.org.co.uk)

Equality & Human Rights Commission [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Government Equalities Office [www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)

Equality Challenge Unit [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)

Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality [www.iscre.org.uk](http://www.iscre.org.uk)

Suffolk LGBT Network [www.suffolklgbtnetwork.org.uk](http://www.suffolklgbtnetwork.org.uk)

Optua (Suffolk disability charity) [www.optua.org.uk](http://www.optua.org.uk)

SIFRE (Suffolk Inter Faith Resource) [www.sifre.org.uk](http://www.sifre.org.uk)