

# Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

## 1. About this policy

- 1.1. The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy of the Union of Brunel Students (referred to as "The Union") is not contractual. However, it clearly outlines the Union's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating any unlawful discrimination and harassment in the workplace.
- 1.2. The Union is committed to equality of opportunity for all, and values diversity. It will demonstrate this commitment through encouraging a community in which all individuals may contribute without fear of discrimination. We are dedicated to creating an environment where everyone is respected, valued, and provided with equal opportunities to thrive. We strive to lead by example in promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equality in all facets of our organisation.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all employees, trustees, and members of the Union. We also expect all representative stakeholders to adhere to this policy. It encompasses all aspects of our interactions with staff and relations among staff members at every level. This includes but is not limited to job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, HR policy development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

## 3. Purpose

- 3.1. The purpose of this policy is to embody a proactive stance toward inclusivity, advocating for and supporting all underrepresented groups while fostering an inclusive culture that values diversity. The Union will provide equal opportunities as an employer, a representative and campaigning body and as a provider of services.

## 4. Discrimination

- 4.1. Discrimination is unlawful when it takes place on one of the following grounds (known as 'Protected Characteristics'):
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender re-assignment
  - Marriage and civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation
- 4.2. We recognise that people may suffer from the following discrimination, some of which are not covered under the Protected Characteristics: age; ability or disability (which includes chronic and long-term illness); ethnic origin; caring or parental responsibilities; gender or gender identity; HIV status; marital status; nationality; opinions or beliefs on matters such

as religion or politics; physical appearance; race; sexual orientation; spent criminal convictions; trade union affiliation; employment status; socio-economic background; medical condition; full or part time student status, mental health status; any other distinction.

- 4.3. You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including members, current and former employees, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the Union, outside the Union (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other Union-related contacts, and on Union trips or events including social events).
- 4.4. Failing to implement reasonable adjustments to mitigate barriers to accessing services due to disability is unlawful in the UK. This obligation includes modifying or removing physical features that prevent or unreasonably hinder disabled individuals from utilising services. Moreover, service providers must proactively anticipate and address any potential barriers that could obstruct disabled individuals from accessing their services.
- 4.5. The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:
  - a. Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because of their sexual orientation.
  - b. Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, A job advert says applicants must have spent 10 years working in commercial services. The business could be discriminating indirectly based on age. This is because the advert excludes younger people who might have the skills and qualifications needed. The advert should instead say that applicants need a specific type of experience and knowledge.
  - c. Harassment: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which 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 dignity at work policy.
  - d. Victimisation: retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.
  - e. Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.
- 4.6. The Union will not discriminate against any member or potential or existing employee on the grounds of their personal views or activities except where these adversely affect reputation, values, function or obligations of the Union.

## 5. Principles

The Union is committed to:

- 5.1. Ensuring proactive promotion of equality of opportunity within the Union.
- 5.2. Fostering an inclusive and respectful work environment where harassment, bullying, intimidation, or violence are not tolerated.

- 5.3. Acting with cultural humility; being aware of the limitations of our own cultural lens, and how this affects the way we understand or relate to others who view the world through a different cultural lens.
- 5.4. Preventing unlawful discrimination and victimisation, and complying with our legal obligations.
- 5.5. Embedding our stance in relevant training and communication for all members, staff, sports clubs, and societies. It is essential that they actively counter prejudice and discrimination, demonstrating their commitment to equality and diversity policies and practices.
- 5.6. Making every effort to accommodate the needs of any employee or member who becomes disabled or experiences an increase in disability during their involvement with Union activities. We will consider reasonable adjustments or opportunities for retraining and redeployment, as appropriate, to overcome barriers caused by disability.
- 5.7. Collaborating with the University and other relevant bodies to promote our commitment to equality and diversity and its associated objectives. We will ensure that both the Union and the University are actively working to comply with current relevant legislation.
- 5.8. Proactively working to involve our members who are from underrepresented backgrounds in our activities while promoting shared values.

## **6. Implementation of this policy**

### **6.1. Roles and Responsibilities**

- a. The Cabinet Committee, through the HR and Compliance Manager, will be responsible for monitoring the day to day implementation of this policy and reviewing the methods of training in, and the promotion of, equality and diversity. In addition, the People and Activities Committee will be responsible for annually reviewing the ED&I activities of the Union, and any strategic objectives relating to this.
- b. All managers are responsible for implementing and monitoring Equality Impact Assessments for their departments, fostering working practices and procedures which are free from discrimination; and for ensuring that all employees observe and comply with this policy.
- c. All employees and members have a duty to cooperate in the implementation of this policy. This includes ensuring they do not act in a discriminatory way or influence colleagues or members to harass, abuse, intimidate or threaten any employees or members.
- d. Any groups or individuals found to contravene our equality and diversity statement will be subject to disciplinary procedures, or access to services, support, or patronage may be denied or reviewed.

### **6.2. Language and communication**

- a. Employees and members are expected to ensure that their written, spoken, and digital communications (eg: WhatsApp and emails), as well as any published materials, do not include language or images that could knowingly discriminate (or incite hatred), against others.
- b. Employees and members are asked to exercise good judgement and be aware of common, or inappropriate, or offensive references in relation to any of the

following: age; ability or disability; ethnic origin; caring or parental responsibilities; gender or gender identity; HIV status; marital status; nationality; opinions or beliefs on matters such as religion or politics; physical appearance; race; sexual orientation; spent criminal convictions; trade union affiliation; employment status; socio-economic background; medical condition; full or part time student status; mental health status; any other distinction.

- c. We will strive to ensure that all Union communications are written with cultural competence and inclusive language. We recognise the importance of acknowledging and embracing diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and identities in our communications. By using inclusive language and considering cultural sensitivities, we aim to create a welcoming and supportive environment for all members of our Union, promoting a sense of belonging and understanding among our diverse community.

### 6.3. Events and Activities

- a. Prior to organising any event or activity, we will ensure that ED&I considerations are integrated into the planning process, this will be achieved through completing an Equality Impact Assessment for all our events and activities.
- b. We will strive to make our events accessible to all individuals, regardless of their physical abilities, sensory needs, or other requirements. This may include providing sign language interpreters, wheelchair access, quiet spaces, or any other accommodations necessary to ensure full participation.
- c. Discrimination, harassment, or exclusionary behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated at our events. We will have clear procedures in place for reporting and addressing such incidents, ensuring that our events remain safe and welcoming spaces for everyone.

### 6.4. Training and Support

- a. The HR and Compliance Manager will ensure that all permanent staff and full-time elected officers will undertake equality and diversity training provided by the University.
- b. Student staff and part time elected officers will receive equality and diversity training alongside, or integrated into, other Union training or induction programmes.
- c. We will encourage and support staff to get involved with the Universities staff networks.
- d. We will provide an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to ensure our employees have access to support, counselling, and a safe space to discuss any issues they may have. This programme will address the diverse needs of our workforce.

### 6.5. Recruitment

- a. The Union will regularly review its procedures and selection criteria to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted and otherwise treated according to their relevant individual abilities and merits.

- b. We will treat all applicants fairly, whether they are internal or external candidates. Selection criteria will strictly align with job requirements and be consistently applied to all applicants. Person and job specifications will only include necessary requirements for effective job performance. Candidates for employment or promotion will be objectively evaluated against job requirements, with consideration given to any reasonable adjustments needed for candidates with disabilities.
- c. Employment terms, benefits, facilities, and services are determined based on business needs and will not be influenced by unfair or discriminatory criteria.
- d. Training will be provided to all staff involved in recruitment and selection processes.

#### 6.6. Training Opportunities

- a. Access to training will be in accordance with the Union's Policy. Access to training will be available to all employees based on the Union's operational requirements.
- b. We will establish a transparent process for applying for personal development funding within the Union.

#### 6.7. Probation and Appraisal Processes

- a. Appraisals and probation processes must operate, and be seen to operate, fairly and equitably for all staff. Appraisers should be aware of their responsibilities not to discriminate on any of the grounds listed above in the way they conduct the appraisal. They should also be aware of the danger of stereotyped expectations, which result in a biased approach. Appraisal should be used positively to support diversity and promote equal opportunities.
- b. During probation processes, it is essential to ensure fairness and consistency in evaluating employee performance and suitability for continued employment. Probation assessments should be conducted with sensitivity to diversity and without bias, focusing solely on job-related criteria and agreed performance indicators.

## 7. Terminology

In our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, the Union respects and applies the following terminology:

**Affirmative Action:** Deliberate actions or policies implemented to address past discrimination or underrepresentation by actively promoting opportunities for marginalized or underrepresented groups.

**Age:** refers to a person's age group. In Higher Education mature students are defined as 21 years old and above.

**Bullying:** Repeated and persistent behaviour that is intended to intimidate, undermine, or humiliate an individual or group, creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

**Caring responsibilities:** refers to someone who provides unpaid support to someone close to them, such as a family member or friend who lives with challenges. These could include physical disabilities, mental health concerns, learning difficulties, and/or substance misuse issues. They are protected legally by the Care Act 2014.

**Cultural Competence:** The ability to interact effectively and respectfully with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, understanding and valuing diversity, and adapting communication and behaviour accordingly.

**Discrimination:** Unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or any other protected characteristic, leading to disadvantage or exclusion.

**Disability:** represents a wide range of conditions which include physical disabilities, long term health conditions, mental health concerns, neurodiversity and learning difficulties. A physical or mental impairment which has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

**Diversity:** recognises and values difference in its broadest sense and creates a culture that recognise, respect, value, and harness difference and that we all have different and unique aspirations, expectations, opportunities, responsibilities, and needs.

**Equal Opportunities:** The principle of ensuring that all individuals, including employees and members, have equal access to services, employment, opportunities and treatment within the Union. Equal opportunities aim to create an environment where everyone has the chance to fulfil their potential, contribute meaningfully, and participate fully, irrespective of their background or circumstances.

**Equality:** aims to create a fairer society where everyone can participate and have opportunities to fulfil their potential. It seeks to ensure that individuals and / or groups of people who are disadvantaged, underrepresented, or marginalised have equal access to opportunities.

**Gender Identity:** refers to when someone chooses to express their gender identity differently to their assigned sex at birth. This can include when someone transitions – whether they have commenced and / or undergone the process of social and / or medical transition and consider themselves transgender or express themselves as gender fluid or non-binary.

**Harassment:** Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

**Inclusion:** aims to involve including every member of the community where they are enabled to use the same facilities, take part in the same activities, and enjoy the same experiences. Full

inclusion is the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

**Inclusive Language:** Language that respects and includes all individuals, avoiding terms or expressions that may exclude, stereotype, or offend individuals or groups based on their characteristics.

**Intersectional:** The term 'intersectional' refers to where you may need to consider impact on more than one protected characteristic or socio-economic disadvantage. Consider where there might be needed to look at cumulative impact.

**Marriage and Civil Partnerships:** recognises someone who is legally married or in a civil partnership and can either be between a man and a woman, or between partners of the same sex.

**Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption:** refers to when an individual or their partner become pregnant or are becoming parents.

**Protected Characteristics:** Specific personal attributes protected by law against discrimination, including race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. However, the Union's policy goes above and beyond the social and cultural protected characteristics currently defined by the Equality Act 2010.

**Race / ethnicity:** describes a group of people who are defined by their race, colour and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

**Reasonable Adjustments:** Measures taken to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not disadvantaged in accessing employment, services, or facilities. These adjustments aim to remove or minimize barriers and enable equal participation and opportunity.

**Religion or belief:** includes any religion and any religious or philosophical belief. It also includes a lack of a religion or belief.

**Sex:** refers to a male or a female of any age. In relation to a group of people it refers to either men and/or boys or women and/or girls.

**Sexual Orientation:** is an umbrella term that encompasses sexual identity, preference, attraction, and behaviour.

**Social economic status:** refers to an individual's or group's position within society which depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence. The Union recognises that individuals from a more deprived social economic background may face deprivation, oppression, and marginalisation.

**Stereotyping:** Making assumptions or generalizations about individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or other protected characteristics, without considering individual differences or abilities.

**Unconscious Bias:** Implicit attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner, often leading to unintentional discrimination or unequal treatment.

## **8. Raising a concern**

- 8.1. The Union will not tolerate any form of discrimination by employees to employees, members, suppliers or visitors. The Union will ensure any breach of the Policy is treated seriously and may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- 8.2. Anyone who believes the Union may have unlawfully discriminated against an individual, in accordance with this statement, have the right to make a complaint free of retribution.
  - a. Member complaints can be made through the Union's complaints procedure.
  - b. If you are an employee and believe you have experienced discrimination, you have the option to address the issue through our Grievance Procedure. We recommend initiating a discussion with your line manager as the initial step in accordance with this procedure. If the complaint involves your manager, you can approach their manager instead.
  - c. Complaints from visitors, providers or other external stakeholders can be made through the Union's complaints procedure.
- 8.3. The right to report instances of discrimination, bullying and harassment or victimisation extends to any employee or member who witnesses any incident which infringes on this policy even if they are not a direct victim themselves.
- 8.4. You must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under the relevant Disciplinary Procedure.

Approved by:	Cabinet
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Manager responsible:	HR & Compliance Manager