

# Equal Opportunities Policy

## 1 Statement of policy

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the University Council, together with the Vice-Chancellor and his senior management team to the promotion of equality of opportunity in the University of Ulster.

It is the University's policy to provide equality of opportunity in employment to all, irrespective of:

- Gender, including gender reassignment;
- Marital or civil partnership status;
- Having or not having dependants;
- Religious belief or political opinion;
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller);
- Disability;
- Sexual orientation;
- Age;
- Socio-economic background;
- Trades union membership; and
- Employment status.

The University is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All job applicants, employees and others who work for it will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

Moreover Article 28 of the Charter of the University states that "Persons shall not be excluded by reason of religious belief, political opinion, race or sex from admission as members or employees of the University or from office or employment therein or from any advantage or privilege thereof; preference shall not be given on the grounds of religious belief, political opinion, race or sex; and the religious beliefs of members and employees of the University shall be treated with due respect".

The University recognises that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice; it also makes sound business sense. This equal opportunities policy will help all those who work for the University to develop their full potential in line with organisational needs, thus ensuring that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised fully to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.

## **2 Scope of the policy**

This policy applies to all current and prospective employees of the University. (Equality and diversity matters in relation to students are addressed in a range of policies and procedures and in the University's Equality Scheme).

## **3 Equality commitments**

The University is committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all people;
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all people are treated with respect;
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Fulfilling all its legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice;
- Complying with its own equal opportunities policy and associated policies;
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate; and
- Regarding all breaches of the equal opportunities policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

This policy is fully supported by senior management and has been agreed with the Trades Unions.

## **4 Implementation**

The Council of the University has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Senior management, together with all managerial and supervisory staff have responsibility for promoting equality of opportunity and for ensuring the policy is implemented.

Individual employees acting on behalf of the University have a responsibility in law and in terms of the University's policy to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In particular, employees must:

- Not discriminate against fellow employees or applicants, or harass or intimidate other employees;

- Not discriminate against or harass or intimidate student members of the University or applicants for places in the University;
- Co-operate with measures introduced by the University to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination;
- Not induce management, Trade Unions or fellow employees to practice discrimination; and
- Ensure that all dealings with the public are undertaken in a non-discriminatory manner.

In order to implement this policy the University will:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants and relevant others (such as contract or agency workers);
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all managerial and supervisory staff;
- Provide equality training and guidance as appropriate, including training on induction and management and leadership courses and other development;
- Ensure that those who are involved in recruitment or promotion processes will be trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques;
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices (e.g., staff newsletters, intranet);
- Seek commitments from other persons or organisations such as sub-contractors or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation and our workforce; and
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfill the objectives of the policy.

## **5 Monitoring and review**

The University has in place appropriate information and monitoring systems to ensure the effective implementation of its equal opportunities policy. It will continue to monitor in accordance with legislative requirements, and to develop action plans to address any issues raised as a result of monitoring.

The Policy will be kept under review. Associated policies, guidance for staff and procedures will be discussed with the Trade Unions, whose agreement and support will be essential to the continuation of a working environment which is free from discrimination and where equality of opportunity is promoted.

## **6 Complaints**

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation<sup>1</sup> are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures<sup>2</sup>, which are available on the University's website or from the Equality Unit or the Department of Human Resources. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

In addition to the University's internal procedures, employees have the right to pursue complaints of discrimination to an industrial tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal under the following anti-discrimination legislation:

- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, as amended;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended;
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, as amended;
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003;
- Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, as amended;
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006; and
- Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, as amended.

However, employees wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal will normally be required to raise their complaint under the University's internal grievance procedures first.

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<sup>1</sup> When a person is treated less favourably than another because that person has, for example, asserted rights under any of the discrimination laws or has helped another person to assert such rights or given information to the relevant statutory body, or because it is suspected that the person might do any of these things.

<sup>2</sup> Staff Grievance Procedures, Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedures

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees who make complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.