

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The University of Ulster is committed to the principles of Equality of Opportunity and recognises their importance in fair employment practices. The University and its Trade Unions recognise that the promotion of equal access to employment opportunities is of benefit both to the University, by ensuring contact with the widest employment market, and to the University's employees and job applicants by allowing fair competition for employment opportunities on the basis of merit.
- 1.2 It is essential that employment practices are operated on the basis of the relevant merits, abilities and potential of individuals, and are free from any criteria which cannot be justified by the demands of the post.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the framework for the provision of equal opportunities in employment and for the elimination of unlawful and unjust discrimination in practice. It is supported by various Codes of Practice which deal with aspects of policy implementation.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 Article 28 of the Charter of the University of Ulster, provides 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".
- 2.2 In conformity with the general intention of this Charter, the University re-affirms its commitment to a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities in employment in which individuals are selected, trained, appraised, promoted and otherwise treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. The law requires that no job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of religious belief, political opinion, sex or marital status, race or disability. The University will ensure that every effort is made to avoid discrimination, whether direct or indirect, on such grounds as colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, Trade Union membership, responsibility for dependents, or employment status.
- 2.3 Objectives of the policy are:
 - (a) to promote equality of opportunity in recruitment, promotion and staff development;
 - (b) to eliminate unfair and unlawful discrimination in employment;
 - (c) to ensure that all applicants for employment, transfer and promotion are considered solely on the basis of the relevant qualifications, skills,

aptitudes and abilities they possess;

- (d) to develop appropriate training programmes, and to ensure that all employees are made aware of and encouraged to take advantage of suitable opportunities for training and advancement;
- (e) to take such affirmative action as may be necessary and appropriate and not prohibited by legislation; or
- (f) to ensure that all are aware of their responsibilities as managers, employees, representatives of the University, and colleagues under the provision of the relevant legislation, the University's employment policy and associated Codes of Practice;
- (g) to eliminate harassment.
- (h) to encourage a harmonious atmosphere at work which is based on mutual respect.

2.4 The policy applies to all employees and prospective employees.

2.5 To achieve these aims and objectives, the University is committed to a programme of action and monitoring and will make available resources to ensure the effective implementation of this policy.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY AS AN EMPLOYER

3.1 It is recognised that responsibility for providing equality of opportunity rests primarily with the University as an employer. The responsibility for policy formulation is undertaken by the Staffing Committee of Council. The Director of Human Resources is the officer charged with its implementation.

3.2 All supervisory and managerial staff have responsibility for promoting equality of opportunity and for ensuring the policy is implemented.

3.3 The Director of Human Resources will, in addition, have responsibility for:

- (a) the co-ordination and monitoring of the policy;
- (b) its review and development together with the relevant Codes of Practice and for advising the Staffing Committee on these matters.

3.4 The University makes the following commitments to ensure the effective implementation of its employment policy:

- (a) to consult with the Trade Unions on its content and implementation through the normal channels;
- (b) to ensure that the policy is made known to all employees and job applicants;
- (c) to provide training and guidance for relevant staff, to ensure that they understand and are able to discharge their responsibilities in law and in accordance with the University's policy;

- (d) to review employment procedures and practices with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination;
- (e) to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and to identify possible areas for action; and
- (f) to take whatever affirmative action is required (within the confines of the law) to ensure effective implementation of the policy.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STAFF AS EMPLOYEES OF THE UNIVERSITY

4.1 Individual employees acting on behalf of the University have a responsibility in law and in terms of the University's policy for assisting in the prevention of discrimination.

4.2 In particular, individual employees must

- (a) not discriminate against fellow employees or applicants or harass or intimidate other employees;
- (b) not discriminate against student members of the University or applicants for places in the University;
- (c) co-operate with measures introduced by the University to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination;
- (d) not induce management, Trade Unions or fellow employees to practise discrimination;
- (e) ensure that all dealings with the public are undertaken in a non-discriminatory manner.

4.3 Discriminatory acts or behaviour will be viewed seriously by the University and will be treated under the provisions of the relevant disciplinary code/procedure.

5. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES AND CODES OF PRACTICE

5.1 In relation to the implementation of its employment policy the University will review employment procedures and terms and conditions of employment, and will develop codes of practice/notes for guidance in specific areas to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination. These will include recruitment and selection, training and development, promotion, and gender free language.

6. MONITORING

6.1 It is recognised that monitoring plays a crucial part in the effectiveness of a policy on equal opportunities. It is further recognised that monitoring is not an end to itself but should be used to highlight the need for affirmative action. This will include areas such as recruitment, promotion and training. The University will gather appropriate information for the purposes of monitoring.

- 6.2 In accordance with the requirements of the Fair Employment Act 1989, the University will also continue to monitor the perceived religion of its workforce and of all applicants for appointment.
- 6.3 Such information as is collected from individual employees for monitoring purposes will be strictly confidential, and will only be used in accordance with the Fair Employment Act 1989.
- 6.4 An analysis of the information obtained through the monitoring process will be submitted to the Staffing Committee and will provide a database for the initiation of affirmative action programmes designed to work towards achieving objectives of equality. Such reports will also be a matter for discussion and consultation with the staff unions.

7. POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Policy will be kept under constant review. The development of both the employment policy and Codes of Practice will be discussed with the Trade Unions whose agreement and full support will be essential to the continuation of a working environment which is free from discrimination.