

# Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy

## 1. Context

York St John University is committed to promoting an inclusive, respectful and welcoming community in which all staff, students and those who engage with the University are treated with dignity and respect. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are fundamental to our mission as an academic institution and to our role in serving diverse communities locally, nationally and globally.

We aim to create an environment in which individuals are able to participate fully in work, study and university life, feel valued for their contributions, and are supported to reach their full potential. We actively challenge unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and promote a culture based on mutual respect, integrity and openness.

The University recognises the protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The University recognises that individuals may experience multiple and interconnected forms of disadvantage due to interaction of different aspects of their identity, circumstances or experiences. Our approach seeks to consider these intersections when developing policies, services and practices.

The University recognises its requirements to prevent, eliminate and address the following types of unlawful discrimination:

- Direct Discrimination
- Direct Discrimination based on Perception and Association
- Indirect Discrimination
- Discrimination arising from a Disability
- Failure to make a disability-related reasonable adjustment
- Harassment
- Harassment based on Perception and Association
- Victimisation
- Instructing, inducing or causing discrimination

Our approach is grounded in our legal and regulatory responsibilities, including the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. In fulfilling these duties, the University will have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not; and
- foster good relations across our diverse community.

The University recognises that equality, diversity and inclusion operate alongside, and are strengthened by, the protection of lawful freedom of speech and academic freedom. In

accordance with our Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, we support the open exchange of ideas, including lawful views that may be challenging or controversial. Academic teaching, research and debate are essential to the University's purpose and will be protected within the law.

## **2. Definitions and use**

The University has produced a glossary of terms which sits alongside this Policy. This glossary sets out the definitions used by the University in relation to all aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that the University fulfils its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010. If there is any uncertainty on the meaning or interpretation being used in relation to any aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion, this [glossary](#) should be referred to in the first instance.

## **3. Strategic Framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The University has a Strategic Framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Its aims and objectives are:

- We will use social models of inclusion to ensure EDI by design so that EDI is demonstrated and embedded in all that we do.
- We will prioritise activity that cultivates a sense of belonging and collective commitment across all members of the University community.
- We will create a diverse and inclusive workplace that values, sustains and leverages the perspectives and experiences of all our employees.
- We will take a coordinated, prioritised and intersectional approach to our EDI work to maximise the impact of the outcomes we deliver.
- We will promote and cultivate a culture of compassion across our communications, policies and processes
- We will promote the impact of our EDI-focussed research and will grow that research to deliver enhanced social value.
- We will demonstrate leadership with learning, teaching and assessment activity that delivers inclusive education for all.

The EDI Framework is aligned with the strategic aims set out in the University for Social Impact Strategy - [University for Social Impact Strategy | York St John University](#).

We recognise that strategic commitments must translate into meaningful day-to-day experiences for staff and students and our Strategic Framework sets out a path to 2030 which identifies how we plan to do this.

## **4. Shared responsibility and expected behaviour**

All members of the University community share responsibility for contributing to an inclusive environment. Staff, students, governors, contractors and partner organisations are expected to treat others with courtesy, professionalism and respect in all interactions, whether in person, online or through digital communication. The University will take appropriate and proportionate action where behaviour falls below these expectations.

Concerns relating to discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, or bullying will be addressed through established procedures and associated reporting mechanisms.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

### Board of Governors

The Board of Governors has ultimate accountability for compliance with equality and human rights legislation and will:

- keep under review the University's approach to equality, diversity and human rights;
- promote equality, diversity and inclusion within the Board's own operation and composition;
- actively engage in relevant personal and professional development as relevant for their role.

### Executive Board and Senior Leadership Team

The Executive Board and Senior Leadership Team will:

- foster and cultivate a culture that promotes inclusion and respect and prevents discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place to promote equality, diversity and human rights and prevent unlawful discrimination and harassment;
- promote personal and professional development opportunities that strengthen understanding of equality, diversity and inclusive practice;
- listen to, and where possible act upon, ideas that support delivery of the commitments set out in this policy;
- be accountable and transparent to the University community regarding actions taken to implement this policy;
- engage with staff networks to support inclusive decision-making and organisational learning.

### Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- promoting the values and expectations set out in this policy;
- responding sensitively and appropriately to concerns about discrimination or harassment in accordance with University procedures;
- ensuring and monitoring compliance within their areas of responsibility.

### All Employees

All employees are expected to:

- read and understand the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy;
- understand their rights and responsibilities under equality legislation;
- undertake continuing personal and professional development, including mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Bias e-learning modules as part of induction and further role-appropriate training;
- take appropriate steps if they have concerns about unlawful discrimination or harassment.

## Students

Students are expected to:

- read and understand the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy;
- contribute to an inclusive learning environment;
- engage respectfully with others, including where there are differences of opinion;
- avoid behaviour that could constitute harassment, discrimination, bullying or exclusion
- raise concerns and take appropriate steps if they experience or witness unlawful discrimination or harassment, with support from the University.

## **6. Institutional commitment**

As an educator, employer and purchaser of goods and services, the University is committed to embedding inclusive practices in recruitment, education, research, curriculum design, employment practices, partnerships and procurement activities. We will take evidence-based and proportionate steps, including positive action where appropriate, to address disadvantage and remove barriers to participation and success.

In practice, this includes:

### Recruitment and employment

- promoting fair, transparent and inclusive recruitment and selection processes;
- supporting equitable access to development and progression opportunities;
- fostering working environments where all staff are treated with dignity and respect.

### Learning and teaching

- designing accessible and inclusive curricula, teaching methods and assessments;
- ensuring students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential;
- creating learning environments where diverse perspectives can be expressed and explored respectfully.

### Support and wellbeing

- maintaining clear, accessible and robust processes for reporting and addressing discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct;
- ensuring individuals can raise concerns without fear of victimisation.

### Disability and reasonable adjustments

- putting in place clear procedures to provide reasonable (including anticipatory) adjustments for disabled applicants, students and staff;
- taking proactive steps, where possible, to remove barriers and improve accessibility beyond individual adjustments;
- ensuring that disabled individuals are supported to participate fully in all aspects of University life.

Our institutional approach to decision making (equality impact assessment) provides a structure to fully embed inclusion into any decisions, policies or activities that may impact on individuals or groups.

The University will monitor progress, publish relevant equality information, and review its objectives and practices regularly to ensure ongoing compliance with legal duties and alignment with regulatory expectations, including those of the Office for Students.

This statement is supported by, and should be read alongside, the University's wider framework of policies and procedures relating to equality, dignity and respect, freedom of speech and academic freedom, complaints and disciplinary processes. See Supporting policies and further information, below.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are collective responsibilities. Through shared commitment and accountability, we aim to maintain a university community where diversity is respected, human rights are upheld, and all individuals can learn, work and contribute with confidence.

## **7. Compliance and training**

Where concerns arise that this policy has not been followed, the University will consider appropriate and proportionate action through the relevant staff or student procedures.

The University is committed to ensuring that all staff and students receive appropriate training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the statutory requirements relating to freedom of speech.

## **8. Supporting policies and further information**

### Policies and Procedures

- Freedom of Speech Code of Conduct - [Freedom of speech | York St John University](#)
- Our Approach to Dignity and Respect - [Dignity and respect | York St John University](#)
- Complaints Policy - [Concerns and complaints | York St John University](#)
- Whistleblowing Policy – [Whistleblowing | York St John University](#)
- For staff policies please refer to the Intranet

### Key Legislation

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Section 146 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations \(Consolidation\) Act 1992](#)
- [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#)
- [Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Act 2023](#)
- [Gender Recognition Act 2004](#)
- [Data Protection 2018](#)
- [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

#### Version control statement

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