



Equality & Diversity Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1. This is a single equality strategy to ensure that equality and diversity are guiding principles in our pursuit of academic excellence. Its introduction coincides with the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and builds on its principle of integrating equality and diversity in policy and practice. We are pleased to have brought together a Single Equality Action Plan covering the period to April 2013 and subsequently the [University Equality Outcomes and Actions](#) for the period from 30 April 2013 until 29 April 2017. The Equality Outcomes and Actions are part of the overall Strategy, which specifically aims to address equality of opportunity in relation to the Protected Characteristics under the Act and sets out the priorities for action for the University of Edinburgh. (A full version of the Equality Act can be viewed at:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf and the associated Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 can be viewed at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2012/9780111016718/pdfs/sdsi_9780111016718_en.pdf)

1.2 The University has successfully integrated equality and diversity into the priorities of successive strategic plans, and built on that by setting new targets in the University of Edinburgh Strategic Plan 2008-2012, which were continued and expanded in the Strategic Plan 2012-2016.

1.3 We also see the importance of making the strategy open and accessible to all members of the University. This is why we have introduced a dedicated equality and diversity website. This website brings together information on our current policies, some aspects of law in these areas and updates on best practice and developments in government policy.

Our Vision

1.4 We aspire to be a place of first choice for some of the world's most talented students and gifted staff. The University is committed to developing a positive culture, where all staff and students are able to develop to their full potential.

1.5 The University is committed to embedding Equality and Diversity across all its work, and believes this strategy reflects its commitment and contribution to its place as a world-

leading centre of academic excellence.

- 1.6 We have set targets at University Strategic level as well developing a single equality action plan to address our duties under the Equality Act 2010 encompassing all of its protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. We identify improvements in the student experience, the challenges faced by disabled staff and students in accessing higher education and gender issues that may affect the pursuit of scientific work as key to tackling real issues.
- 1.7 The University welcomes the challenges ahead and we are committed to working on the issues facing the higher education sector. It is also expected that this new integrated E&D Strategy will assist the University in working collaboratively with other UK and Scottish Universities and relevant public bodies; in working in partnership with the Trade Unions; in knowledge transfer, leadership development, monitoring and policy development.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Equality and Diversity strategy initially covered the period to November 2012 and has subsequently been extended – through the development of the Equality Outcomes and actions in 2013 - to cover the period to April 2017 in keeping with the [University of Edinburgh Strategic Plan \(2012-2016\) and the requirements of the](#) Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 ('Scottish Specific Duties'). It meets our responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Specific Duties through publishing a single set of Equality Outcomes and actions encompassing the protected characteristics under the Act. It is a Strategy for the whole University community of staff and students.

3. Principles

- 3.1 The University promotes a positive culture for working and studying to which every student and member of staff contributes and within which they are able to develop to their full potential.
- 3.2 It is central to the concept of a university that all members of that community treat each other with respect, regardless of their race, disability, ethnicity, gender (including transgender), age, sexual orientation, or beliefs.
- 3.3 The University will embed Equality and Diversity across all its work. To achieve this all staff and students have a part to play.
- 3.4 The University will simplify the key principles in law so that they may be easily accessible

to everyone throughout the institution and to make this information widely available for all members of the University in a range of forms.

- 3.5 Freedom of expression within the law is central to the concept of a university. To this end, the University will foster a culture which permits freedom of thought and expression within a framework of mutual respect.
- 3.6 We will always have an Action Plan to meet the aims of the Strategy which will be reviewed regularly and address the following:
- (a) **Knowledge management:** to improve the availability and use of knowledge and information across the University, and to support knowledge exchange for improvement in policy and practice.
 - (b) **Equality monitoring:** to monitor equality data to identify changes over time and to carry out research in areas of particular significance.
 - (c) **Innovation and improvement:** to promote a positive equalities culture for all staff and students through self-evaluation and evidence based innovation in teaching, learning and services.
 - (d) **Collaboration of resources:** in the field of Equality and Diversity leading to more streamlined and efficient services.
- 3.7 The three previous Equality Action Groups (Race, Gender and Disability) who were overseeing the implementation of the three statutory action plans will be subsumed into in a Single Equality Action Group.

4. How the Law Applies to the University

- 4.1 The University of Edinburgh has legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The Act consolidated previous anti-discrimination legislation and also introduced new measures that have direct implications for higher education institutions.
- 4.2 The Equality Act provides a single legal framework with clear, streamlined law that will be more effective at tackling disadvantage and discrimination. It brings disability, sex, race and other grounds of discrimination within one piece of legislation which covers nine protected characteristics. (A full version of the Equality Act can be viewed at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf)
- 4.3 The Equality Act introduced a new Public Sector General Equality Duty which requires the University to pay 'due regard' to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Definitions of Equality and Diversity and Discrimination

4.4 ¹Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the same opportunity to fulfill their potential. Equality is backed by legislation designed to address unfair discrimination based on membership of a particular group.

4.5 ²Diversity is about recognising that everyone is different in a variety of visible and non-visible ways. It is about creating a culture and practices that recognise, respect and value difference. It is about harnessing this potential to create a productive environment in which the equally diverse needs of the customer/client can be met in a creative environment. It is about creating a workforce who feel valued/respected and have their potential fully utilised in order to meet organisational goals. Diversity is not an 'initiative' or a 'project'; it is an ongoing core aim and a core process.

4.6 Discrimination

The areas of discrimination where the law offers protection are:

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favorably than another in a similar situation on a protected ground.

Specific forms of direct discrimination have also been defined:

- **Associative (transferred) discrimination** is now extended to cover age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
- **Perceptive discrimination** is now extended to cover disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic
- **Disability related direct discrimination:** is where a person discriminates against a disabled person if, on the ground of that person's disability, he or she is treated less favourably than a person not having that particular disability has been or would have been treated.
- **Disability - reasonable adjustments:** is where employers are obliged to make reasonable adjustments to premises or working arrangements to prevent a disabled person from being placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with persons who are not disabled.

¹ www.lawscot.org.uk, accessed 11.08.11

² www.lawscot.org.uk, accessed 11.08.11

Indirect Discrimination is where a rule or practice is applied across the board, but it operates to particularly disadvantage a protected group when compared to others outside the group, unless the rule is needed to achieve a legitimate aim, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

Victimisation is where an individual who has sought to enforce their rights, or has helped another to do so, has as a result been treated less favorably than others who have not complained.

Harassment where an individual is subjected to unwanted conduct on a protected ground which has the purpose or effect of violating his or her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive environment.

4.7 Protected Characteristics

The nine protected characteristics on the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful are:

Age - refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

Disability - a person has a disability if s/he has 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.

Gender reassignment - the process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and civil partnership - marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters. The public sector equality duty does not apply to this characteristic.

Pregnancy and maternity - pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race - refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief - Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex - a reference to a man or to a woman

Sexual orientation - Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes

5. Equality Outcomes and Actions

Refer to the [University's Equality Outcomes](#) for the University's Equality Outcomes and associated actions.

6. References

[Equality and Diversity website](#)

[University's Strategic Plan 2012-16](#)

[EDMARC - Equality & Diversity Monitoring and Research Committee](#)

[Equality & Diversity Coordinators and their role descriptor](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#)

7. History and Review

This Equality and Diversity Strategy was reviewed in 2010/11 in line with the University's Strategic Plan and to incorporate legislative changes. It was approved by Court on 7th November 2011 and takes effect from the same date. It replaces the previous Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan; the University's Disability, Gender and Race Equality Schemes and Action Plans; the Race Equality Policy and the Policy and Codes of Practice on Equal Opportunities in Employment and on Equality and Diversity for Students.

7.1 Change Control

This strategy was updated in 2013 to refer to the University's Strategic Plan 2012-16, the new Scottish Specific Duties Regulations 2012 and the publication of University Equality Outcomes and Actions, replacing the previous Action Plan.

This Strategy will be reviewed in the event of any significant changes to the legal position on equality or diversity, or any other relevant factors. In the absence of such a change, it will be reviewed following publication of the University's next strategic plan in 2016.

8. Alternative Format

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact Equality and Diversity at: equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 650 8127