

Equal Opportunities Policy

The University of Cambridge is committed in its pursuit of academic excellence to equality of opportunity and to a pro-active and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity. This commitment is underpinned by:

1. the University's core values, expressed in its mission statement as follows:
 - freedom of thought and expression,¹
 - freedom from discrimination; and
2. the Equality Act 2010.

Admissions and employment

The University is committed to policy and practice which require that:

- student admission to the University and progression within undergraduate and postgraduate studies will be determined only by personal merit and by performance; and
- staff entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and by the application of criteria which are related to the duties and conditions of each particular post and the needs of the institution concerned.

Subject to statutory provisions, no student, member of staff, applicant for admission as a student, or applicant for appointment as a member of staff will be treated less favourably than another because they belong to a protected group. This commitment applies to a former student, alumnus or alumna, or former employee where the alleged unlawful conduct arises out of and is closely connected to the former student's or former staff member's previous relationship with the University.

Protected groups

Protected groups are defined in the Equality Act 2010 as Sex, Gender Reassignment, Marriage or Civil Partnership, Pregnancy or Maternity, Race (including Ethnic or National Origin, Nationality or Colour), Disability, Sexual Orientation, Age, or Religion or Belief. The University recognises all religious and philosophical beliefs, as well as the lack of religion or belief, and the right of all members of its community to discuss and debate these issues freely. All staff and students are therefore entitled to teach, learn and carry out research in a culture that values vigorous debate.

¹ Freedom of speech and academic freedom: The University of Cambridge is fully committed to securing and promoting freedom of speech within the law for staff, students and visiting speakers in all activities related to academic life. The University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech (<https://www.governanceandcompliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/governance-and-strategy/university-code-practice-freedom-speech>) sets out the University's values, approach and associated procedures in detail. All the University's policies and procedures are to be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the Code of Practice; in the case of any perceived conflict, the provisions of the Code of Practice will take precedence insofar as that is lawful and reasonably practicable.

Complaints and grievances

If any person admitted as a student or appointed as a member of staff believes that they are experiencing unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation in their admission, appointment, or progression through the University on the grounds of any of the above protected characteristics they may make a complaint, which will be dealt with through the agreed procedures for complaints or grievances or the procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment, as appropriate.

Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty

The University will take active steps to meet its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 by having due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation based on a protected characteristic, whether actual, perceptive, or associative;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Promoting good practice

In fulfilment of its core values, the University will take active steps to promote good practice by:

- subjecting its policies to continuous assessment in order to examine how they affect protected groups and to identify whether its policies help to achieve equality of opportunity for all these groups, or whether they have an adverse impact;
- monitoring the recruitment and progress of all students and staff, collecting and collating equalities information and data as required by law or for the furtherance of University equalities objectives;
- promoting an inclusive culture, good practice in teaching, learning, and assessment, and good management practice, through policy, training, and the development of codes of best practice;
- taking positive action wherever possible to support this Equal Opportunities Policy and its aims; and
- publishing this policy widely amongst staff and students, together with policy assessments, equality analysis and results of monitoring.

Implementation and governance

This Equal Opportunities Policy will be enacted through the University's Equality initiatives and associated implementation processes and plans, which cover:

- governance and policy development, including relevant committees, compliance, equal pay, assessing the impact of policies and practices, and reporting;
- developing and implementing best practice;

- inclusive practice for students and staff;²
- promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I), including marking relevant diversity events, training, and guidance; and
- data and information provision, including appropriate monitoring and compliance reporting.

Reporting and compliance

Progress against ED&I actions and initiatives will be reported to the ED&I Committee on a termly basis and in the ED&I Annual Reviews and Data Reports.³

Relevant legislation

The University will meet all statutory obligations under relevant legislation and, where appropriate, anticipate future legal requirements. The relevant legislation includes the following:

- The Equality Act (2010) and associated secondary legislation
- Criminal Justice and Immigration Act (2008)
- The Racial and Religious Hatred Act (2006)
- The Civil Partnership Act (2004)
- The Gender Recognition Act (2004)
- Criminal Justice Act (2003)
- The Human Rights Act (1998)
- The Protection from Harassment Act (1997)
- Special Education Needs and Disability Act (2001)
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023

The University's consideration of statutory obligations will be informed by the Codes of Practice or Guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Office for Students, and other relevant bodies. These Codes are not legally binding (though they are admissible as evidence in Employment Tribunals) and the University supports them fully.

Policy amendments

This Equal Opportunities Policy will be amended as appropriate to meet the demands of future legislation

Further information

Further information on legislation and the University's ED&I initiatives is available on the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) pages and on the [website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).

² <https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/policies-procedures/dignity-work-policy-2023-ed>.

³ <https://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk>.