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| Committee Title | Student Voice | | | | | |
| Date of Meeting | 19 th February 2024 | | | | | |
| Title/Subject | DRAFT Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy | | | | | |
| Paper Presenter | Sara MacLean, Student Voice Team Leader | | | | | |
| Brief Summary of Issues/Topic | <p>We are currently redrafting our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. The current policy is from 2017 and considerable work in EDI has happened since then.</p> <p>The draft policy is presented to Student Voice for discussion. This policy is still in the formation stage and this version is to highlight the direction of travel for the policy as well as being used to gather feedback on what our new EDI policy should cover.</p> | | | | | |
| Recommendation(s) | Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | Discussion | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Approval | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Any member can ask a question by raising their voting card and being recognised by the Chair to speak. | | | | | |
| | Student Voice are asked to discuss the draft policy and provide feedback for future versions. | | | | | |
| Who have you consulted when developing the paper? | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee | | | | | |
| Staff/Student Protocol | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Will any decision approved directly affect the work of staff? | Chief Executive will be consulted | | | | | |
| Should the paper be submitted to any other committee following its consideration/approval at this meeting? | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Executive Committee Employee Committee Health and Safety Committee Legal Consultants Trustee Board | | | | | |
| If yes, please state the committee and proposed date of submission. | | | | | | |

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy (draft)

1. About this policy

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate a proactive approach to inclusivity and outlines what we will do to create a safe and inclusive organisation that learns and grows to proactively dismantle barriers, eliminate discrimination, and create equity for our people and those we serve.

1.2 We welcome our legal duties not to discriminate as a Students' Association and an employer. We aim to go beyond the narrow scope of legislative compliance and follow best practice, making equity, fairness and diversity a fundamental part of all our activities.

1.3 We believe that everyone should feel welcomed and supported in an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and able to make a valuable contribution to the SU whatever their background or differences.

1.4 We recognise people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions, and we wish to encourage and harness these differences to make our services more relevant and approachable.

1.5 As a body representing students, we believe that we must not only understand equality, diversity and inclusion, but should reflect and champion it.

2. Scope

2.1 Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy is for everybody. This policy applies to and protects staff (including full time officers), job applicants, students, student leaders, trustees, volunteers, contractors, consultants, suppliers, and other organisations and people encountering GCU Students' Association.

2.2 This policy applies to everything we do as an employer, representative body, volunteering organisation and service provider. It covers conduct at our premises as well as related meetings, events, activities, and social occasions at other locations.

2.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

3. Commitment

We will:

3.1 Promote equity, dignity, fairness, inclusion and respect for all where individual differences and contributions are recognised and valued.

3.2 Create a culture that is free from prejudice, bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination and offensive behaviour. By educating our people on their responsibilities to champion EDI, promoting inclusive language, and respectful behaviour, and ensuring any breaches are appropriately dealt with.

3.3 Provide support and take complaints of discrimination, unequal, unlawful, or offensive treatment seriously. Including, ensuring those who witness, or experience it know how, and where, to make complaints and seek support.

- 3.4 Proactively seek to raise up the voices of marginalised groups and those discriminated against by society, within our own organisation and in how they can influence their university experience.
- 3.5 Provide equal opportunities in employment to all existing and potential employees ensuring no applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment or be disadvantaged by conditions or requirement that cannot be shown to be justifiable.
- 3.6 Make jobs at all levels accessible, available on a flexible basis, where possible, and proactively make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of our people.
- 3.7 Provided employees and volunteers with advice and training to help increase awareness, as appropriate, on issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 3.8 Continuously review our practice to ensure all adequate requirements are addressed, including through regular consultations with employees and members.
- 3.9 Embed our position in relevant training and communication to all members, staff, sports clubs and societies as part of a requirement that they actively counter prejudice and discrimination, and demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity policies and practices
- 3.10 Ensure that all areas of the Students' Association are accessible. This includes both physical and online spaces.
- 3.11 Endorse the use of non-discriminatory images and language in all posters and publications displayed or distributed through the Students' Association. These should include a fair representation of the student body avoiding stereotypical, sexist, racist, ageist, heterosexist or otherwise discriminatory images or language. Positive images should be used wherever possible.

4. Laws and regulations

4.1 This policy supports our compliance with the requirements of relevant UK legislation including the Equality Act 2010. See Appendix 1 for reference.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Achieving inclusion across our organisation is a collective task. All individuals have a responsibility to adhere to the Policy and apply it in their activities in all dealings with, or on behalf of the Association. This includes all staff, members, visitors and external agencies that are contracted to carry out works, or provide goods or services.

5.2 The Trustee Board will ensure the Association fulfils its legal responsibilities and takes overall responsibility for the development of equality and diversity, leads by examples and ensures that progress is reviewed and further actions instigated as necessary.

5.3 The Chief Executive has the responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy through line management accountability. They ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities, accountability and will provide the relevant training and support required.

5.4 Managers have responsibilities to ensure that all individuals are aware of and abide by this policy. Managers are also responsible to take action if the behaviour of any member of staff falls below the standard required.

5.5 Everyone within our organisation has the responsibility to ensure that their actions and language are consistent with the spirit as well as the contents of this policy.

5.6 Everyone within our organisation are encouraged to disclose any instances of unequal treatment, harassment or bullying that they become aware of

6. Raising a concern or complaint

6.1 If any member, volunteer, potential or current employee of GCU Students' Association feels they have been treated in a manner not in accordance with this statement, they have the right to make a complaint free of retribution.

6.2 All allegations of discrimination or harassment will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and promptly. The Students' Association will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints of discrimination or harassment.

6.3 All complaints will be treated seriously and will be investigated in accordance with the organisation's grievance, complaints or disciplinary procedure, as appropriate and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

6.4 The right to report instances of discrimination, bullying and harassment or victimisation extends to any employee or member who witnesses any incident which infringes on this policy even if they are not a direct victim themselves.

6.5 You must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure in the case of employees or the Discipline Code if you are a member.

7. Policy enforcement

7.1 Any member of staff found to be in breach of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the standard terms of employment.

7.2 Any volunteer found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be removed from current and future volunteer opportunities.

7.3 Any member or visitor found in breach of this policy will, where appropriate, be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be referred to GCU Student Code of Conduct and/or refused future services from GCU Students' Association

7.4 The Association reserves the right to refuse access to its buildings and facilities to any individual or organisation that has breached current legislation or the requirements of this Policy.

Appendix 1: Legislation and Statutory Obligations

Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 consolidates previous anti-discrimination legislation and introduces measures to ensure that society does not ostracise those with a protected characteristic. The legislation has additional expectations on Higher Education providers, who are to protect the protected characteristics of individuals but also have due consideration to balance those with the freedom of speech.

Equality Act 2010

The main sections of the Act came into force on 1st October 2010.

- Consolidates and streamlines anti-discrimination legislation and replaces all previous equality legislation.

Introduces some new measures to strengthen the law to support progress on equality.

Specifically, the Act protects individuals based on their actual, perceived or association with 'protected characteristics'. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership (in the context of employment only)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins)
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Appendix 2: Glossary

To assist the development of the consistent approach to knowledge and understanding of language and terminology in equality and diversity, the following should be used as guidelines for understanding and practical application in the course of the Association's work.

Equality (equal opportunities) is defined by the Scotland Act 1998 as: 'The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes including beliefs or opinions such as religious belief or political opinions'. It ensures that disadvantaged groups have access to opportunities, however, it is not a minority issue; it is everyone's responsibility and right.

Diversity focuses on maximising the potential of all staff and members through valuing the different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds, genders, sexual

orientations, ages, skills and experience of individuals, and seeks to utilise these differences for the benefit of the organisation. It recognises that 'one size does not always fit all'. Diversity should not be used interchangeably with equality; they both have distinct meanings. At the Association, equality is the primary focus and diversity may be one of the outcomes of successful equality work.

Mainstreaming describes the process where equality and diversity are brought into the core of the Association's work and integrated into day to day activities. Equality and diversity are considered for all functions and activities, including policy, training development, implementation and review. It is a departure from the traditional view of equality as an optional 'added extra'. It requires collective responsibility and implementation.

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (perception discrimination), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (discrimination by association).

Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in your organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if you can show that you acted reasonably in managing your business, ie that it is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

Institutional racism is defined by the Macpherson report into the death of Stephen Lawrence as, "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people".

Positive action through training and encouragement for under-represented groups can be lawful. For example, if over the previous twelve months no women, or people from a particular racial group, have been doing a certain type of work then it is lawful to offer training only for women or the racial group. Another example of positive action is advertising to encourage candidates from a particular group to compete for jobs.

Positive discrimination occurs where one person is treated more favourably than another because they have a protected characteristic. It is generally prohibited under the Equality Act 2010, unless an occupational requirement applies. Positive discrimination because of a person's disability is allowed, and may sometimes be required if there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Equity refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality: Whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.

Microaggressions are behaviours that signal, intentionally or unintentionally, to someone from an under-represented group and/or a group perceived to have less power, that they do not belong or they are not welcome.