

Equal Opportunities

The Union has a strong and effective commitment to creating a work environment that celebrates diversity and recognises equality of opportunity. All staff are expected to abide by the policy when carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

The Union has also adopted a Harassment and Bullying Policy to protect employees from harassment and bullying at work.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Our equal opportunities policy

- We are committed to equal opportunities for everyone. We encourage a community where everyone can contribute as fully as possible without fear of being treated unfairly or being discriminated against. We recognise that people may become disadvantaged or experience oppression or harassment because of the discrimination that exists in society. We aim to get rid of all forms of discrimination, including positive discrimination, within the students' union and union-related activities, and to campaign to raise awareness in Manchester Metropolitan University and other organisations. We will try, wherever possible, to create a welcoming environment for all our users both in the union and the university.
- Our equal opportunities policy aims to provide equal opportunity for everyone. In this document are our policies to prevent students, staff and visitors being disadvantaged on the grounds of the following.
 - Ability or disability
 - Age
 - Gender, sexism and transgender
 - HIV status
 - Marital status
 - Nationality and language
 - Physical appearance
 - Political opinion
 - Racial origin
 - Religious belief
 - Sexuality
 - Any other factors.
- We are committed to this policy of equal opportunity so no student, employee or visitor will be treated less well than any other.
- We believe discrimination, direct or indirect, is not acceptable and we will not tolerate it. Discrimination denies people the opportunity to fulfil themselves and this is damaging to the union as a whole and to society in general.
- We recognise that this equal opportunities policy can only succeed with the active support of the whole organisation and we will involve students and staff in developing and putting into place this policy and related activities.
- We are committed to fighting labelling, stereotyping, violent attacks and misleading information. We will also tackle attitudes within institutions that lead to discrimination, feelings of superiority, and a lack of acknowledgement of other people. These attitudes, or phobias, work in similar ways to other forms of oppression, they are a result of the general environment but with a united response we can challenge and change them. We are committed to fight against all forms of phobia and oppression and we will treat any such activity as a disciplinary offence.

Ability or disability

- We understand that people with special requirements, impairments, learning difficulties, mental illness and disabilities are entitled to equal opportunities during their time with the union. These groups are particularly open to indirect discrimination through the facilities available and the way that they can be treated, but they also face individual and institutional discrimination throughout their lives.
- We are committed to positive action so that disabled people have the same opportunity as non-disabled people. We will try to promote equality through a comprehensive equality campaign. We will continue to lobby the university for improved access and facilities, consult with disability advisory groups and take all

reasonable steps to make sure that any developments, improvements or alterations take account of the needs of disabled students, employees and visitors.

- Through a continuing campaign of equality, we will make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her disability or ability will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

Age

- We recognise that age discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than others in similar circumstances because of their age.
- We believe that students, staff and visitors are entitled to equal and fair treatment whatever their age. We are committed to creating an environment where ageism is not acceptable. We have a Mature Students Group to protect the rights of mature students.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality, we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her age will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

Gender, sexism and transgender

Gender

- We recognise that both men and women can experience disadvantage and discrimination because of their gender. In a sexist society prejudiced attitudes, behaviour and values are widespread and can limit a person's activities, preferences, choices and aims. Some people can feel they must conform to a gender role that may inhibit their achievement.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her sex will not be tolerated.

Sexism

- Sexism is a form of discrimination, which leads to inequality between the sexes. In a sexist society, men may be advantaged because of their gender rather than their abilities. For this reason we have a Women's group to continue the fight for equality.
- Sexism is very complicated and affects attitudes, values, behaviour and expectations. It can restrict the life experiences of women and men. People from every social and cultural background are put at a disadvantage by sexism and it damages the whole of society. While males appear to benefit from it, they can also suffer because society decides what emotions and behaviour are acceptable in men and boys.
- We are totally united in the fight against sexism and will not accept it in any form. We will treat sexism as a serious disciplinary offence.

Transgender

- We recognise the rights of transgender people as members and employees of the union.
- Most people only have to look at their body to determine their sex, but for transgender people, the sex of their body feels wrong and they see the world as if they were of the opposite sex. This can be confusing for transgender people, since most people expect a male body to contain a man and a female body to contain a woman. This is not true for transgender people and the fact that they have the wrong physical characteristics for their true sex causes them great problems.
- There are transgender people living in the UK who have to fight a constant battle with society's prejudice. It is our intention to provide equal rights for transgender people through this policy.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality, we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone during gender reassignment (sex change) will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

HIV status

- We recognise HIV/AIDS as a disability, as does the British Council for Disabled People. We are concerned about the discrimination faced by people with HIV and we are committed to making sure that our services and employment opportunities do not discriminate on the grounds of HIV status.
- We recognise that some groups that have been traditionally discriminated against have experienced higher levels of prejudice and discrimination because of HIV. We accept our responsibility to resist such discrimination by providing accurate information about HIV and promoting HIV/AIDS awareness material.
- We do not ask our students or staff to declare their HIV status. Through a continuing campaign of equality, we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her HIV status will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

Marital status

- We believe that nobody may discriminate against another person because of his or her marital status, whether they are single, separated, divorced, married, widowed, celibate, in a long-term relationship or otherwise.

- Through a continuing campaign of equality we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her marital status will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

Nationality and language

Nationality

- We believe that discrimination against a person or group based on their nationality is a form of racism and it will not be accepted under our equal opportunities policy.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her nationality will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

Language

- We realise that minority groups can be discriminated against because they speak a different first language. While we will always protect people who are disadvantaged because of their language, we cannot promise to produce material in all languages, but we will consider any requests.

Physical appearance

- We recognise that many people are discriminated against because of their physical appearance. We believe that someone's physical appearance should not affect his or her right to equal opportunity.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality, we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her physical appearance will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary issue.

Political opinion

- We recognise the rights of all political groups to have equal rights under our equal opportunities policy. Discrimination because of political opinion is not acceptable and we will not tolerate it. However, we will not accept political opinions that conflict with our equal opportunities policy.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her political opinion will not be tolerated, as long as that opinion does not threaten any other minorities, spread hatred or reinforce stereotypes and is not a form of extremism. We will regard discrimination because of political opinion as a serious disciplinary offence.

Racial origin

- We realise that ethnic groups meet intolerance and racism due to their skin colour, creed, accent or nationality and we have formed a union group, the Anti-racism collective, to combat such hatred and discrimination. It is essential that we recognise the need for specific policy actions for ethnic groups.
- Racism can be seen as a complicated web of prejudiced attitudes, values and behaviour. It keeps alive the belief that some racial or ethnic groups are superior to others. Racist attitudes, linked with authority and power, can badly affect the life chances of people from racial or ethnic minorities. Racist attitudes can lead to racial conflicts, harassment and violence that, in turn, will create unhappiness and fear in racial and ethnic minority groups.
- Racism can be present in many ways. The following three levels can be identified.
 - Structural racism - where racism is fixed firmly within society.
 - Institutional racism - where institutions have procedures and practices which may unintentionally discriminate against groups of people.
 - Individual racism - where the action of individuals continues a pattern of discrimination.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality, we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her racial origin will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

Religious belief

- We recognise the rights of all religious groups to have equal rights under our equal opportunities policy. Discrimination on the grounds of religious belief is unacceptable and we will not tolerate it. However, we will not accept the reinforcement of beliefs that conflict with our equal opportunities policy.
- We will, where possible, recognise religious holidays and festivals, provide facilities that are needed for the act of prayer and consider any other needs.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality, we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her religious belief will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

Sexuality

- We realise that people face discrimination on the basis of their sexuality, often as violence and hatred.
- We recognise the need for specific policies regarding lesbian women, gay men and bisexuals and we have a Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) group to protect these students.

- 'Homophobia' is a product of our society, involving irrational fear, ignorance and dislike of same-sex relationships. Homophobic behaviour can show itself in different ways. It is a complicated pattern of prejudice, values, stereotyping and discrimination that devalues lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.
- Through a continuing campaign of equality, we intend to make sure that discrimination against someone because of his or her sexuality will not be tolerated and we will regard it as a serious disciplinary offence.

Complaints procedure

It is our intention to solve complaints in a positive way. We will deal with complaints in line with the provisions of the Constitution. If you have a complaint about discrimination or a matter relating to the equal opportunities policy, please contact the equal opportunities officer.

Putting the policy into practice

- The executive committee, management, staff and the union members are responsible for putting this policy into place.
- The equal opportunities officer will continue to review and update the document and outline a programme of action with the equal opportunities committee.
- We remind all staff and elected officers that they must keep to the policy in their work and if they do not keep to the policy it may result in disciplinary action. Training for students and staff will be put in place to make sure everyone is aware of their responsibilities.
- Elected officers are responsible for the policy working within the areas that they influence and control.

Disclaimer

- By producing this equal opportunities policy, we are not implying or accepting that we have not applied fair standards of practice in the past. In fact we have always done our best to practise the highest possible standards in this area, but we do recognise the need to constantly examine policy and practice to reflect changing standards and expectations. For this reason alone we are now replacing our anti-discrimination policy for this equal opportunities policy.
- Formulating this policy has not been prompted by any allegations of unfairness or inequality being practised by the organisation or its employees.
- This equal opportunities policy keeps to the law at all times.
- We will formally review this policy every year, or more often as the need arises. Our executive and the student representative council must approve any changes.
- We recognise that there are many forms of discrimination and that this policy does not try to include everything. The main aim of our equal opportunities policy is to fight all forms of discrimination whether they are mentioned within this policy or not.