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| Equality Objectives 2013-2018 |

Introduction

Our commitment to promoting equality and diversity is long-standing and is a substantial strand through the current strategic plan. The Board of Governors has consulted extensively with students, staff and the wider community on the new strategic plan for the period 2013- 2018. This paper and the action plan set out in detail the objectives for the period 2013-2018.

Progress as at June 2014 has been reported within the action plan and the members of the Diversity and Equality Committee invited to comment.

Overview

1. The values of the University are set out in the strategic plan;

* Intellectual openness, honesty and love for learning
* Human equality and dignity
* Democracy and mutual respect
* Educational and Social inclusion
* Environmental sustainability and social responsibility
* Ethical and professional behaviour
* Active engagement and partnership

Our Equality Objectives

1. These Equality Objectives have been developed to meet the duties set out in the Equality Act 2010. This will be the University’s first single equality framework. Previously we have had separate schemes for disability, gender, and race equality

Progress towards meeting the objectives will be reported to the Diversity and Equality Committee and to the new University Executive. Decisions on the priorities for action will be made through a process of consultation, informed by analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.

**Objective 1; To continue to build the knowledge, understanding and commitment to equality and diversity of all members of the University community**

The University will continue to seek to ensure that all members of the University community are aware of their individual and collective responsibilities and legal duties in relation to equality and diversity by providing training, promotional activities and publicity campaigns.

The University will continue to make clear that it expects all students, staff and visitors to treat each other with dignity and respect; there are appropriate procedures in place to deal with any complaints of unacceptable behaviour.

The University will continue to seek to embed equality and diversity within its policies and procedures to increase accountability and heighten awareness of the issues.

**Objective 2; To provide a living, studying and working environment that is inclusive and in which all students can learn, achieve and prosper.**

The University is proud of its diverse student community and aims to maintain this by continuing to provide access to higher education for all those able to benefit from its educational provision. The University will continue to seek to provide wider opportunities for participation to those from under-represented groups and applicants from non-traditional routes.

Prospective students will be encouraged to declare a disability and the University will continue to anticipate the requirements of disabled students and the adjustments to be made.

Academic staff will continue to be encouraged and supported to develop and implement inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practices.

The University will continue to seek to ensure that students have an opportunity to develop their employability skills in a variety of ways, including via work placements and studying abroad.

The University aims to increase levels of student engagement and will obtain and use feedback from students about their experiences to inform future policy and practice.

**Objective 3; To maintain and, where possible, increase the diversity of the staff and deliver a fair and supportive working environment for all**

The University recognises that a well-informed, diverse staff population can identify and meet the needs of a diverse student population and that different perspectives inspire creativity and innovation. The University will continue to ensure that its recruitment policy encourages applications from people with as wide a range of backgrounds, skills and experiences as possible. We have policies and procedures in place to ensure staff have equal opportunities to develop and progress, and these will be monitored and enhanced, where required.

The University is committed to remaining a TwoTicks employer. Job applicants and staff will be encouraged to declare a disability and the University will take a proactive approach to reasonable adjustments.

The University will continue to measure staff engagement by providing opportunities for staff to give feedback on their experience of being a member of staff. This information, together with management information, will be used to identify and address any equality issues and inform decision-making and objective-setting.

**Objective 4; To promote and enhance access to our services, premises, facilities and information for the benefit of students, staff and the wider community**

The University is committed to maintaining an environment in which people as students and/or members of staff feel able to reach their full potential and providing accessible and person -centred support services is critical to this. Many of the recent investments in physical facilities have been with this objective in mind and we will continue with our programme of improvements to the physical environment, and to improving services for students and staff.

The University is committed to ensuring that all members of the University community are able to participate as fully and equally as possible. We recognise that the provision of comprehensive, accurate information in a variety of formats is essential in enabling people to make informed choices.

The University will continue to meet its statutory responsibilities regarding accessibility and exceed these as far as reasonably practicable.

The University’s facilities make a direct contribution to the wider community with developments such as The Hive and The Arena. These developments and other services will assist with increasing the awareness of the role and value of higher education to society, and help to raise the educational aspirations of people locally and more widely.

**Objective 5; To ensure that major strategic decisions are made with an awareness of their consequences for different groups of people and those with managerial responsibilities demonstrate inclusive leadership behaviours**

The University recognises the important role that senior leaders have in promoting a culture that is inclusive and espouses dignity and respect and that effective communication and education are critical to this. Senior leaders will continue to be expected to take every opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity and uphold the University’s values.

The University expects those businesses and organisations it works with to operate in accordance with equality legislation and will take this into account when considering whether to offer a contract, enter into a partnership or host an external service provider.

The University will ensure that all partners are aware of their commitment to promoting equality of access and will work with them to identify best practice and suggest ways to improve access where necessary.

The University will continue to monitor the equality profile of its committees, senior management team, and Board of Governors and take steps to increase the diversity where it is felt necessary.

Equality monitoring

1. The University currently collects information on the protected characteristics of age, gender, ethnic origin, nationality and disability from members of staff and students. This information is confidential and is used anonymously to compile annual statistical reports, by protected characteristic.

The University is committed to reviewing its equality data collection and analysis to ensure the information it gathers and publishes demonstrates how it has complied with the general equality duty.

**Legal background**

1. The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous anti-discrimination law, consolidating it into a single act. The public sector equality duty replaces the previous separate equality duties for race, disability and gender.

The nine protected characteristics under the Act are:-

* **age**
* **disability**
* **gender reassignment** (defined as ‘where a person has proposed, started or completed the process to change his or her sex’. Individuals do not have to be under medical supervision to be protected by the law).
* **marriage and civil partnership**
* **pregnancy and maternity**
* **race**
* **religion or belief** (religion is defined as ‘any religion, including a lack of religion’, belief is defined as ‘a religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief’)
* **sex**
* **sexual orientation** (defined as person’s sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex or persons of either sex. This means the Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people)

1. Under the general equality duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 the University has obligations as both an employer and as an education provider. We will have due regard to the need to:

* Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
* Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
* Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition, we will:

* Publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the general equality duty across our functions;
* Prepare and publish equality objectives
* Publish the information and the objectives in a manner that is accessible to the public