



Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction and Definition

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibility of all elected officers, staff and volunteers of the Students' Union to actively work towards ensuring that the Students' Union is an equal opportunities environment, free from harassment and unlawful discrimination. It is also expected that all members will abide by and uphold both this Equal Opportunities and Zero Tolerance Policies to actively contribute to making the Students' Union a safe and welcoming place for all.

As an organisation based on fair democratic representation and inclusive participation, we believe fundamentally in the principles of Equal Opportunities and in their importance in being a representative and participative Students' Union. We believe that all students have the right to get involved with all aspects of the Students' Union and University life. We not only pride ourselves on promoting Equal Opportunities, but we also pledge to campaign against discrimination both on campus and in the wider community.

Defining Discrimination

To help give definition to the boundaries of this policy, we will define discrimination as being unfair treatment on the basis of;

- Age
- Carer Responsibilities
- Disability including Mental Health Difficulties
- Social Class
- Marital or Civil Partnership Status
- Gender Identity
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race, Religion or Belief
- Gender and/or Sexual Orientation
- Trade Union Activity
- Criminal Background
- Weight
- Level or Mode of Study (Year and/or PT/FT)
- Or any other category where discrimination cannot be reasonably justified.
(<https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/types-of-discrimination>).

It should be noted that age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity are now to be known as 'protected characteristics' under law.

Application

The Students' Union regards discrimination as unacceptable and promotes Equal Opportunities both as an employer and as a representative and campaigning body and provider of services. To minimise the risk of discrimination, the Students' Union works with the Universities Equality and Diversity advisor to provide Equality and Diversity training to both Students' Union staff, and any student groups associated with the Students' Union.

The Students' Union is constantly considering the needs of its members. In particular, the way in which events and services are organised such as accessibility and additional material, which aim to promote an inclusive environment.

The Students' Union recognises the role of language in the shaping and definition of attitudes and behaviour. As such, the Students' Union endorses the use of non-discriminatory language in all Students' Union literature, and in everyday use whilst on Students' Union premises or when representing the Students' Union where appropriate. This includes avoiding the use of unexplained jargon and acronyms. One example of this work in action occurred following student feedback, leading to the Students' Union now providing subtitles on all media where practical.

Furthermore, this means that all posters and publications displayed in, or distributed through the Students' Union should include a fair representation of the student body. As an extension of this work, the Students' Union also works with all partner businesses and venues to ensure no offence is caused via marketing messages and general communications.

Definition of Equal Opportunities

York St John Students' Union commits to providing an Equal Opportunities' environment. By this we mean that it shall strive to uphold an environment free from harassment and discrimination by challenging prejudice to maintain a safe and welcoming place. The Students' Union also aims to involve all students in all aspects of the student lifestyle, by promoting a diverse workplace and social space for our members.

The Students' Union recognises that combating unlawful discrimination is a substantial task, and that it would be almost impossible to detail all relevant areas in a single policy. However, the Students' Union is committed to the principles of Equal Opportunities and to these being at the heart of its policies, decision making and operations. We welcome any feedback from students on how to improve our provision and will be actively seeking student's feedback on our provisions for equal opportunities.

Who and what is covered

- All staff, including student staff.
- All elected representatives
- All volunteers working within a Students' Union capacity
- All members of York St John Students' Union
- All visitors, contractors, business, external organisations and University Staff using the Students' Union or working on its behalf.

Bullying and Harassment

Harassment is an unacceptable form of behaviour. The Students' Union is committed to protecting its members and staff from any form of harassment which might inhibit them from pursuing their work or studies, or from making proper use of Students' Union facilities. Any report of harassment will be taken very seriously and can be reported via the student disciplinary procedures, staff disciplinary procedures or the Zero Tolerance policy – harassment can be on the basis of any protected characteristic identified in the “Defining Discrimination” section of this policy.

Ensuring the policy is upheld

Overall responsibility for ensuring the policy is upheld lies with the President of Welfare and Diversity (PWD) and the Equality and Diversity committee. Managers and/or Supervisors and Officers are responsible for ensuring the compliance of this policy within their various departments. However, if an issue arises then the VPWD shall be informed in all circumstances and will advise when and where necessary.

Reporting Mechanisms: Zero Tolerance

In 2013 the Students' Union also introduced a Zero Tolerance Policy. The aim of the policy is to work within the remits of protection of discrimination similar to this Equal Opportunities Policy. The Students' Union also maintains and promotes a Zero Tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment. Any breaches of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be dealt with confidentially and taken seriously and should be reported through the Zero Tolerance procedures to be investigated. Details of the policy, including full reporting procedures can be found here:

https://f570581712c4a7cdc7af-25e56f94cfcb20c2d6df36c4c7cde80e.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/9AC3497D_YSJSU_Zero_Tolerance_Policy_Draft_December_2013.pdf