

# Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

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## 1) Introduction

Open SU exists to make a positive difference for all OU students. Delivering that mission requires a culture where equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are integral to everything we do: governance, employment, services, representation and collaboration with the Open University (OU).

We are committed to taking a proactive and inclusive approach to equity, valuing diversity and supporting and encouraging all under-represented communities at the OU and beyond.

Open SU recognises the value of difference and is committed to respecting and valuing different identities, perspectives, and backgrounds. We value the individual contribution of people and recognise the systemic barriers still faced by many in society. We commit to acknowledging their experiences and breaking down such barriers and to support all those who could be or are marginalised as a result of (but not limited to):

- age
- civil status
- dependency or caring for dependants
- disability
- family status
- gender reassignment
- marital status
- marriage and civil partnerships
- membership of the Traveller community
- mental health status
- political opinion
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

## 2) Scope

This policy applies to all Open SU staff, trustees, student leaders, volunteers, guests and contractors.

## 3) Legal & Policy Framework

- Open SU opposes unlawful discrimination on the basis of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- We recognise that harassment can be both a civil and criminal matter under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and related guidance. Sexual harassment may constitute a criminal offence and will be treated with utmost seriousness.

### Freedom of Speech

Open SU is committed to upholding freedom of speech within the law, recognising it as essential to the pursuit of knowledge, the exchange of ideas, and the vibrancy of a student-led democratic community. In line with our Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, we affirm that students, staff, volunteers, visiting speakers and all participants in Open SU related spaces have the right to express lawful views and to engage in open, critical, and respectful debate. We promote an environment where diverse perspectives can be heard while ensuring that freedom of speech is exercised responsibly and without breaching legal standards relating to safety, harassment, discrimination or other unlawful conduct. This commitment applies across all Open SU spaces, including online forums, events, society activities, and any premises or platforms we host or moderate. As a working document subject to regular review, our Code ensures that Open SU continues to balance openness and inclusivity with our wider legal and organisational responsibilities, maintaining a community in which all members feel able to participate fully and safely.

## 4) Principles and Commitments

Our organisations vision commits us to:

- Empower a student voice that is strong, effective and representative of our diverse membership.
- Work collaboratively with the University so that students (especially those whose voices are seldom heard) are at the centre of decision-making.
- Build an inclusive community that nurtures pride and belonging across the full diversity of identities and lived experiences.
- Provide relevant, high-quality services that enhance the student experience for everyone.

Open SU believes that EDI is a fundamental enabler to ensure effective delivery of our vision, values and strategy. We will endeavour to ensure that EDI is embedded in all our activities and to create open, safe environments where our staff and members feel valued.

Further to our vision and values, this policy seeks to adopt the following principles:

### 1. **Student-led and collaborative decision-making**

- a. We will share decisions with students and communities, embedding their voice in governance, strategy, services and day-to-day improvement.

### 2. **Collaboration with the University**

- a. We will collaborate with The Open University to centre students in decision-making and to advocate for equitable, accessible and inclusive systems and processes across the student journey.

### 3. **Inclusive community and culture**

- a. We will foster a community that nurtures pride and belonging, takes a zero-tolerance stance on bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination, and ensures reasonable adjustments remove barriers to participation.

### 4. **Fair employment and volunteering**

- a. We will make opportunities for training, development and progression available to all. We will also make fair, evidence-based decisions and keep our practices under regular review to ensure fairness and legal compliance.

### 5. **High-quality, relevant services**

- a. We will co-design services with diverse students, observe and listen to what matters to them, and evaluate quality through student-centred measures, not one-size-fits-all standardisation.

## **Student Voice, Representation, and Community**

We will empower diverse participation in student voice structures (elections, committees, etc). We will amplify lived experience through multiple accessible channels (e.g., surveys, open calls for content, focus groups, video clips), ensuring feedback informs decisions. We will design programmes and online spaces that build belonging and celebrate diversity.

## **Services, Advice, and Support**

We will place students at the centre of our services, focusing on what matters to them and the 'journeys' they take through advice and representation. We will collaborate with partners (including University services and external organisations) to strengthen provisions and improve outcomes for diverse students.

# **5) Policy Implementation**

## **Responsibilities**

- Board of Trustees – ultimate accountability for EDI; approves policy and reviews annual EDI progress.
- Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team – resource and steward EDI implementation; ensure collaboration with the University centres student voice.
- Head of EDI and Belonging – leads any EDI action plan, training, reporting and continuous improvement aligned to strategy.
- Managers – model inclusive leadership, enable reasonable adjustments, ensure fair recruitment and address issues promptly.
- All staff, Student Leadership Team, volunteers, contractors and representatives – uphold expected behaviours, complete EDI learning, and challenge discrimination appropriately.
- All Open SU members are responsible for their own behaviour and should aim to respect and demonstrate equal opportunities principles.

## Provision

- Open SU understands that different groups of students will have differing needs and will therefore look to provide according to those needs. In some cases this will result in different provisions.
- Open SU recognises the need for 'safe-spaces' for marginalised groups and provides online areas for this purpose on OU Students Connect.
- Open SU is committed to accessibility and ensuring that our activities and opportunities are available to all members. Where necessary we will strive to take reasonable steps to improve access for disabled staff and members. For volunteers we are guided by our [Reasonable Adjustments for Volunteers Policy](#).

## Recruitment and Elections

- Open SU commits itself to being an equal opportunities employer and a democratic body. We work to ensure that there are no unfair discriminations at any stage of our recruitment/election processes or throughout an individual's time working or volunteering with us.
- We regularly review our recruitment procedures and ensure that all our adverts and documentations are accessible and posted to a diverse labour market.

## Development

All staff, elected student leaders and volunteers will receive training relevant to their role, including equity and diversity training.

## Representation and leadership diversity

We will monitor and seek to improve the diversity of our governing body, workforce and student leadership to reflect our communities.

## Expected behaviours

We will place students at the centre of our services, focusing on what matters to them and the 'journeys' they take through advice and representation. We will collaborate with partners (including University services and external organisations) to strengthen provisions and improve outcomes for diverse students.

## 6) Complaints and Raising Concerns

If any Open SU member, employee or volunteer feels that they have not been treated by another in accordance with this policy then they are encouraged to raise a concern. Complaints should be made in accordance with the [Resolving and Settling Differences Policy](#) where they will be dealt with in confidence and in line with Open SU's procedures.

Individuals may also choose to report any harassment through the Open University's [Report + Support mechanism](#), where you can choose to report anonymously.

## 7) Related Documents

### Legal

- Equality act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Relevant CPS guidance on harassment/stalking.

### Guidance

- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) resources on protected characteristics and discrimination.
- AdviceUK Equalities and Diversity Briefing.

### Open SU documents

- [Open SU Strategy](#)
- [Freedom of Speech Code of Practice](#)
- [Reasonably Adjustments for Volunteers Policy](#)
- [Resolving and Settling Differences Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- Staff Handbook
- [Transgender and Gender-Diverse Inclusion](#)
- [Values and Behaviours Policy](#)
- [Volunteer Agreement](#)
- [Volunteering Policy](#)

## Approval & Version History

**Version:** 1.0

**Created by:** Head of EDI & Belonging

**Approved by:** Board of Trustees (28<sup>th</sup> January 2026)

**Next Review:** January 2028