

# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy : Employees

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## Definitions

Term	Definition
Diversity	The demographic of US, people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, and abilities.
Equity	Equity ensures that everyone is given equal access to opportunities regardless of their background or identity. We provide everyone with the appropriate resources they need to do their job.
Inclusion	Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone is treated fairly, and employee voice is valued.
Belonging	Belonging is centred in whether colleagues feel accepted, welcome and safe at Unite Students.
<b>Protected Characteristics (based on the Equality Act 2010)</b>	
Age	How old someone is
Disability	A person has a disability if they have a physical and or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes neurodiversity.
Gender affirmation	This is the process of transitioning from one gender to another. Gender affirmation is when someone chooses to transition to live their life as the gender they identify with. This could be done in a number of ways, including presenting as this gender, having gender affirmation surgery, or beginning hormone treatment – it is entirely based on personal choice. Gender affirmation is known as “gender reassignment” in the Equality Act 2010, but we acknowledge it differently because we believe that someone who transitions is affirming their gender identity.
Gender expression	Gender expression encompasses all gender identities, including female, male, trans-male, trans-female, non-binary and more. It is the way in which a person expresses their gender identity, typically through their appearance, dress, and behaviour.

	The Equality Act 2010 defines this as 'sex', which is what you are assigned at birth (male or female); this does not always correspond with the gender you identify with, therefore we have chosen to define it differently.
Marriage and civil partnership	Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'.
Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant, or expecting a baby. Maternity is protected for the 26 weeks and refers to the period after the birth. This also includes people who are going through In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF).
Race	Race encompasses people who are defined by their race, skin colour, nationality, citizenship, ethnic or natural origin.
Religion or belief	Religion is the commitment to any religion, or lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief must affect your life choices or the way you live in order to be considered a belief.
Sexual orientation	Who you are sexually attracted to.
<b>Harassment and discrimination</b>	
Direct Discrimination	Less favourable treatment of a person compared with another person because of a protected characteristic.
Discrimination by association	Direct discrimination or harassment against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
Discrimination by perception	Direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.
Harassment	Unwanted conduct, which is related to a protected characteristic; It may have the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity; or which is hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to someone; or in a way that is sexual in nature.
Indirect discrimination	Arises when a requirement or condition is applied which cannot be justified and which is harder for one group to meet than another, and the people in that group consequently are placed at a disadvantage.

Victimisation	Victimisation occurs when an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion, or they are ostracised, because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so.
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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

We believe that fostering an environment where every individual is respected and valued for their contribution is fundamental to our values, and future success. Capitalising on what is unique about individuals and drawing on their different perspectives, experiences and skills will add value to the way we operate with our Stakeholder groups.

A number of characteristics are protected in law, in the Equality Act 2010; it is against the law to discriminate against someone on the grounds of age, disability, gender affirmation (referred to as gender reassignment in the Equality Act), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, race, religion or belief, gender expression (referred to as 'sex' in the Equality Act), and sexual orientation.

By embracing the diversity of our colleagues at Unite Students by providing equitable access to opportunities, treating people fairly and respecting them, and ensuring that everyone feels accepted and valued at Unite Students, we are able to enhance our societal impact, and create a positive working environment for all.

## 1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees, whether contracted, temporary or permanent, of the Unite Group plc, and all wholly owned subsidiaries of the company.

# 2. Roles and Responsibilities

## 2.1 The Executive Committee

The ownership of this policy is the responsibility of the Executive Committee. They are expected to model all behaviours set out in this policy. Some of the specific roles and responsibilities for the Executive committee are:

- Owning the policy, and modelling the language and behaviours set out.
- Make decisions to support diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at Unite Students.

## 2.2 All employees

All employees are expected to model the following behaviours:

- Use inclusive language;
- Model inclusive behaviours;
- Be impartial when dealing with reported DEIB & Wellbeing issues (from colleagues and students);
- Be approachable for people to raise DEIB & Wellbeing related concerns;
- Challenge inappropriate behaviours and hold people accountable, by using this policy and our bullying and harassment policy.

They are also expected to:

- Have a responsibility to guard against any form of discrimination and avoid any action which goes against the spirit of this policy; Responsible for demonstrating behaviour and actions that do not discriminate unlawfully, at all times;
- Responsible for promoting dignity and equality of opportunity.
- Responsible for raising any concerns about unlawful discrimination with their Line Manager or HR Representative;
- Must not induce or attempt to induce others to practice unlawful discrimination;
- Co-operate with measures introduced to ensure equality of opportunity and non-discrimination;
- Treat others as they would like to be treated;
- Seek, acknowledge and value others' experience and contribution;
- Must not victimise anyone as a result of them having complained about, reported or provided evidence of discrimination.

### 2.3 Line Managers

- Responsible for implementing this policy in their day-to-day management of employees and in applying and sharing employment policies and practices in a fair and equitable manner to people within their team;
- Ensuring equality and diversity issues are addressed in performance;
- Ensuring all employees act in accordance with this policy, providing necessary support and direction.
- Responsible for raising any concerns about unlawful discrimination with their HR Representative and ensuring any concerns raised under the scope of this policy are treated seriously and sensitively;
- Responsible for dealing appropriately with any breach of this Policy;

- Effectively manage and deal promptly when investigating issues relating to potential discrimination.
- Responsible for ensuring any appointed Agency Staff or Contractors are aware of and adhere to this policy;
- Responsible for promoting equality and diversity through their actions;
- Equitably promote, respect and encourage each employee to reach their potential, regardless of protected characteristics.

## 2.4 Human Resources

- Responsible for advising Line Managers on this policy;
- Responsible for monitoring Equality and Diversity legislation and making any required amendments to this policy;
- Ensuring all employment matters are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner, and are appropriately documented;
- Supporting managers in investigating issues relating to potential discrimination.

## 3. Policy statement

We're proud to be an employer that **embraces individuality**, and we're passionate about building inclusive teams. We focus on creating a collaborative culture where you can be you, where your voice is heard, and where you can truly belong.

**Instinctive inclusion.** We know that to create and maintain a happy healthy organisation, we have to work hard to ensure inclusion isn't just what we do but who we are.

**People make Unite Students.** Employees, students, neighbours all contribute to building environments where we can all thrive.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the roles and responsibilities of everyone at Unite Students, to uphold our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

We are committed to a workplace free from processes, attitudes and behaviours that amount to harassment or discrimination (see definitions). We have a zero-tolerance policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination, which includes any person at, or acting on behalf of, Unite Students.



Any person acting in breach of this policy, who is discriminatory against an individual or group, because of one of the following protected characteristics, will be dealt with under the Unite Students **Bullying and Harassment**, and **Disciplinary policy**.

The protected characteristics, under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability (including neurodiversity)
- Gender reassignment (which we refer to as gender affirmation)
- Sex (which we refer to as gender expression)
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation

Please see the definitions section at the start of this policy.

## 4. Policy Standards

The policy standards are the overarching principles that guide activity at Unite Students. All employees are expected to adhere to these standards, where applicable.

- To ensure diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in the workplace and community.
- To positively promote equity, and fair access to opportunity.
- All conditions of employment and job requirements should meet the needs of the business, but also those who work in it, regardless of age, disability, gender affirmation, gender expression, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation;
- All employees are working towards ensuring fair and inclusive employment practices including recruitment and selection, organisational change, training, pay review and access to facilities;
- All employees have the right to be free from harassment, bullying and discrimination of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour, whether based on age, disability, gender affirmation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender expression, and sexual orientation;

- All employees will be treated with respect and will have the chance to contribute and develop;
- As a customer facing business our employees exhibit behaviour consistent with principles of this policy/fairness and diversity in all of their relationships;
- The company, including its employees, will not ask another employee to act in contravention of the Equality Act 2010 legislation.
- To promote a culture where each Stakeholder group is treated with respect and dignity and recognises the value that a diverse workforce can bring.

Unite Students takes a zero-tolerance stance on discrimination and breaches of this policy will be regarded as misconduct. Serious offences such as discrimination on protected grounds or serious offences of harassment, bullying, or victimisation will be treated as gross misconduct. Unite Students will investigate discriminatory behaviour and enforce the disciplinary procedure where this is considered necessary.

## Appendix A – Support and Further Information

### Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) - LifeWorks

Unite Students offer an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is facilitated through Lifeworks, an independent external organisation.

LifeWorks provide a 24/7, 365 days a year telephone support line to help all employees who need support. The support they provide is strictly confidential, and is not shared with us at Unite Students. You can request to speak to someone of a similar background, or identity as yourself, and Lifeworks will do their best to provide support that is personal to you. They will also aim to provide support in your chosen language, and if this is not possible, they will use a translator. You are always able to decline to give any personal information (gender expression, etc), and it does not impact your ability to access the service.

The 24/7 telephone support line from LifeWorks provides access to a range of information and services including (but not exhaustive):

- Childcare
- Eldercare
- Legal advice (the EAP will not provide employment law advice)
- Tax advice

- Medical information
- Stress management
- Referral to serious illness and accident support
- Structured telephone counselling
- Face to face counselling

The support telephone line is also available to an employee's partner and any dependents in full time education between the ages of 18-24 can access some parts of the support line. In addition to the telephone support line, all employees have access to a range of engaging and useful online tools aimed at promoting general health and wellbeing.

These include:

- Emotional support;
- Fitness advice (including video demonstrations);
- Personal coaching tools;
- Health assessment;
- Medical information;
- Weight loss advice;
- How to deal with aches and pains particularly back pain.

*How do I access it?*

Employees can call: 0800 169 1920 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Outside of UK employees can call: +44 141 533 8293 (but, calls from abroad will be charged).

Employees can access online via an employee's LifeWorks account at <https://unite.lifeworks.com/feed>. You will need your individual LifeWorks username and password to log in.

You can also download the LifeWorks app, just search 'LifeWorks'.

## **External Resources:**

There are also numerous resources available externally to Unite Students:

Samaritans - You can contact them 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call 116 123 (free from any phone), email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or visit some branches in person. You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line on 0808 164 0123 (7pm–11pm every day).

Switchboard - If you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you can call Switchboard on 0300 330 0630 (10am–10pm every day), email [chris@switchboard.lgbt](mailto:chris@switchboard.lgbt) or use their webchat service. Phone operators all identify as LGBT+.

Black Minds Matter UK – A charity supporting Black people to access mental health services.

The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network – A network offering resources and information relating to mental health and wellbeing. They work to connect Black, African and Asian people with therapists of the same background.

Mind – A national mental health charity providing information, advice and support.

National Bullying Helpline – A national charity with a helpline that is available 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday: 0300 323 0169.

Scope – Scope’s helpline provides free, independent and impartial advice and support on issues that matter to disabled people and their families. They can be contacted by phone 0808 800 3333 or textphone dial 18001 then 0808 800 3333 (Monday to Friday 9am – 6pm, weekends 10am-6pm), or by email [helpline@scope.org.uk](mailto:helpline@scope.org.uk).

## Appendix B – Links to other policies

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Disciplinary Policy

## Appendix C – Links to procedures

Transitioning at Work Guide

Transitioning at Work Action Plan

## Appendix D - Legal background

Equality Act 2010

Employment Relations Act 1999

The Equal Pay Act 1970 (amended 1983)

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

The Gender Recognition Act 2004

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005

Race Relations Act 1976, Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Race Regulations 2003

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Human Rights Act 1998

## Appendix E - Document Control Information

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<input type="checkbox"/> Estates	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/> Asset Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital	<input type="checkbox"/> Office Support	<input type="checkbox"/> PMO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Culture Matters
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Version History (copy and paste from top section to here as a record)			
Version	Date approved	Author	Summary of changes

This table is to be used to record all revisions made to this document. Changes made should also be recorded on the Business Management System.