

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement **School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics**

Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The School of English is committed to developing and promoting an inclusive community which recruits and retains staff and students from all sectors of society. We wish to nurture the members of our community, with the aim to unlock the full potential of staff and students by helping to overcome any potential barriers relating (but not limited) to gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnic heritage, religious belief, physical and/or mental disability, and neurodiversity. We will build strong positive relationships within the School and with external partners and promote a common vision where diversity is valued by all. Everyone must be treated equally, with dignity and respect. We will identify how Equality and Diversity are relevant to us and will assist us to achieve our core academic objectives.

Meaning of Equality and Diversity

As a School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics, we are all aware of the importance of language and terminology when it comes to establishing what we mean by diversity. Finding the right, respectful terms to talk to each other about diversity is an ongoing, active process, and we continue to learn much from other members of the community. A key starting point for thinking about our language and policy is the Equality Act of 2010, which “legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.” Differences are to be embraced and accepted. This includes the legal requirement to ensure that no individual is treated less favourably based on their protected characteristics of equality including age, disability, gender, gender reassignment status, marital or civil partnership status, political belief, pregnancy or maternity status, race (including ethnic origin, nationality and colour), religion or belief, sexual orientation, trade union membership, or any personal characteristic of the individual. Actions that undermine “dignity and respect” include harassment, bullying and victimization.¹

Core Commitments of the Policy

1. **Dignity and respect in the workplace:** All staff and students in the School of English, without exception, have an individual responsibility to ensure that they treat others with dignity and respect at all times, and in any medium. This includes the use of social media and email communications.
2. **Equality and Diversity Officer:** An Equality and Diversity Officer will be appointed by the Equality and Diversity Committee in consultation with the Head of School. The EDO will be responsible for the implementation of our Equality and Diversity Policy and will be on hand to advise staff and students on its contents.
3. **Promoting equality of opportunity for students and staff:** The School of English will actively promote equality of opportunity between people of different groups (in compliance with the Public Sector Equality General Duty). This means the School is committed to: a) encouraging student recruitment from under-represented groups; b) retaining and supporting current students from under-represented groups; c) in recruitment of staff (both PSS and academic), the School will endeavour to encourage applicants from under-represented groups. **NB:** under-represented groups in these cases can mean, but is not limited to, BME/working-class/religious minority/transgender/LGBT groups. We have identified these groups in particular as being under-represented among our staff and students.
4. **Mental health equality:** We recognize that we have a seriously high (and increasing) number of students and staff with mental health issues. We are committed to creating an environment that fosters the mental health of students and staff and to take whatever actions are appropriate to support this.

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¹ This policy draws heavily from the Newcastle University Law School Equality and Diversity Policy, and from the Newcastle University Equality and Diversity Action Plan (2014-2016, updated February 2017).

5. **Socio-economic class differences:** As a School that actively recruits students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds (e.g. through the PARTNERS scheme), we commit to supporting these students throughout their degree, to ensure that they have the same employment opportunities as their peers.
6. **Internationalization:** The School of English Strategic Plan for 2016-2018 includes the aim to further the University's internationalization agenda through a series of initiatives. Our Equality and Diversity Policy is the basis of our commitment to finding creative ways of making staff and students more aware of diverse cultural, ethnic and religious differences across the University and also in our relations with other institutions globally. This can happen, for example, through our Year Abroad and Exchange programmes targeted at UG students.
7. **Towards a fully inclusive community:** Our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Day, has recently stated that "attracting the best and most talented staff and students" from around the globe can help with realizing the vision of being a world-class civic university. The School is committed to promoting this vision by actively recruiting students and staff from diverse backgrounds and providing a nurturing environment for them.
8. **Transparency of decision-making:** The School of English will uphold its commitment to Equality and Diversity in all management decisions (including and especially in the recruitment of staff, see point 3). To this end, the process of decision-making should be open and transparent.
9. **Sexual misconduct:** We commit to a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual violence, and sex/gender-related violence, whether involving staff or students, and we commit to having procedures in place at School level for both prevention and response. We particularly recognize the danger of male violence against women (and transmasculine individuals), and that this danger can be exacerbated by other existing power differentials.