

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

## NWUA operates under the MMU Equal Opportunities Policy

### **Our Commitment**

We are committed to the achievement of equal opportunities. This is central to our mission as a University and as a provider of higher education.

We recognise and accept our responsibilities under the law. We believe discrimination, either direct or indirect as defined in law, is unacceptable and we will not tolerate it. In the same way, victimisation, as defined in law, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

However, our policy is not limited to the minimum standards imposed by the law. We are committed to achieve best practice in the area of equal opportunities. Everyone who is or who seeks to be a member of staff or a student of the University is entitled to receive equality of opportunity and treatment that is appropriate and fair irrespective of:

- ◆ age
- ◆ colour
- ◆ disablement
- ◆ marital status
- ◆ race/ethnicity
- ◆ religion
- ◆ sex
- ◆ gender
- ◆ employment status
- ◆ sexual orientation
- ◆ nationality
- ◆ caring responsibility
- ◆ socio-economic status
- ◆ other unjustifiable factors

This list is not exhaustive.

We will be proactive in all matters relating to equality of opportunity and diversity. We value and will celebrate the richness brought to our institution by a diverse population, both of staff and students. We recognise and will seek to reflect the positive contributions brought to the University by the variety of its staff and students.

We also recognise that the behaviours through which diversity is evident must be consistent with the values that underpin this policy document.

Additionally, we recognise that despite our best intentions circumstances may arise where we fail to provide an appropriate and professional service to people, consistent with the aims of this policy. We are committed to take action in such circumstances.

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## **Responsibility**

All members of the University will take responsibility for their actions.

Specifically:

- ◆ The overall managerial responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the Vice Chancellor, who is accountable to the Board of governors.
- ◆ All managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that this Equal Opportunities Policy is implemented in their areas of responsibility.
- ◆ The Director of Personnel is responsible for taking action in relation to equal opportunities in employment matters, for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and for ensuring appropriate provision of supportive staff development.
- ◆ The Academic Director, Deans of Faculty and Heads of Department are responsible for taking action in relation to equal opportunities in the operation of academic programmes.
- ◆ All employees and students are responsible for ensuring that they act at all times in a way that is consistent with our equal opportunities policy. Individuals may be personally accountable should any complaint arise or in respect of breaches of policy.
- ◆ People not employed by the University but who play a part in its activities, e.g. visitors, clients, contractors and suppliers of goods and services will be made aware of our expectation that they will operate within the scope of this policy. We will expect contractors and suppliers to demonstrate their commitment through evidence of their own equal opportunities policy.

## **Scope of the Policy**

The University seeks to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment in relation to all of its activities, both as an employer and as a higher education provider.

As an institution of higher education, we will seek to offer within our admissions policies, equal opportunities for access to courses and to the range of facilities we provide for students. We will seek to encourage the participation of students from a variety of backgrounds, at various stages of their lives and careers, and with a wide range of qualifications and experience. We believe that students should benefit from and take pride in being part of a University that regards its diversity as a significant strength. Selection criteria and procedures will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that equal opportunities are promoted, and that students are recruited on the basis of their merits and abilities. We also believe that merit and ability should determine student progress and achievement. Through effective monitoring and review we will ensure that students from a wide variety of backgrounds can demonstrate progress and achievement.

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As an employer we will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment in the recruitment, selection, retention, training and promotion of staff at all levels, and the adoption of flexible patterns of working. To this end we will develop personnel policies and practices that will demonstrate and further our commitment to Equal Opportunities. Selection criteria and procedures will be designed, and outcomes monitored and reviewed, to ensure that staff are recruited and selected on the basis of their assessed merits and abilities when compared with the needs of the University. We will take care to ensure that applicants or potential applicants are not discouraged or disadvantaged by the adoption of any conditions or criteria which cannot be justified in terms of specific job requirements. Additionally we will seek to attract, encourage and welcome applications from a wide range of people to enhance the diversity of our staff.

These commitments to staff and students will be reflected in the policies we produce. Additionally, we will continue to develop and implement best practice through the establishment of and support for guidance notes on best practice. The development of these guidance notes will take account of relevant statutory Codes of Practice.

## **Implementation**

The University will have policies and procedures that support and uphold this equal opportunities policy. As a result, everyone can expect to be treated with fairness and for judgements to be made that respect their human rights and ensure natural justice. Decisions will be made with integrity following a process based upon transparent criteria.

The University will take action to communicate this policy to all staff, students and others e.g. visitors, clients, contractors and suppliers of goods and services involved in its activities. We will continue to develop and implement programmes to ensure that all staff have received appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities under this policy.

Consultation with and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders will be essential for ensuring that our equal opportunities policy and practice is effective. We also need to ensure that we gain feedback to ensure that the practical impact of our policy and practice does not result in unintended or unfair discrimination or in consequences that are contrary to the aims of this policy. The University will confirm the role of the Diversity Forum as a consultative body and as a continuing feature of the infrastructure supporting this policy. The Vice Chancellor or a designated alternative will chair the Diversity Forum.

On the completion of our review of Equal Opportunities, the Vice-Chancellor, will establish an Equal Opportunities Action Group and this will advise the Directorate on all aspects of equal opportunities and diversity policy, after appropriate consultation with the Diversity Forum and other recognised stakeholders.

The University will develop policies, codes of practice and guidance to deal with specific aspects of the implementation of this Policy. These developments will take place against a clear and published action plan.

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## **Responding to feedback**

The University is committed to respond positively to constructive criticism and complaint in relation to equal opportunities.

We recognise that making complaints and expressing concerns in relation to equal opportunities can be challenging. We will therefore develop specific advice and support to enable staff and students to put forward their concerns effectively.

We will take appropriate action to protect students and staff from discriminatory behaviour by any individual or groups within the institution, or in the course of their duties or study. Allegations of discriminatory behaviour on the part of students or staff will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary or grievance procedure.

Complaints arising within the course of employment or during a period of study as a student should be made utilising for example the:

- Staff Grievance Procedure
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Procedure
- Student Complaints Procedure
- Harassment Procedure

## **Monitoring and Evaluation of the Policy**

The Equal Opportunities Action Group will review relevant performance indicators and will, following consultation with the Diversity Forum, make an annual report to the Directorate.

This report will review both progress against the action plan and make appropriate proposals for further development.

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