

Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Equal opportunities statement

The University of Reading is committed to a policy of equal opportunities and non-discriminatory treatment for all members of its community regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race (to include colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (“**Protected Characteristics**”).

2. About this policy

This policy sets out the University’s approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination. It applies to all aspects of employment and study with us. The University is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that promotes equality and diversity and respects the rights and dignity of all its staff, students and visitors.

This policy has been agreed following consultation with the University and College Union, the University of Reading Staff Forum and Reading University Students’ Union.

This policy covers all employees, students, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, visitors, interns, casual workers and agency workers as well as job applicants and those applying to study at the University.

This policy will apply across the University group (including to its subsidiary companies) anywhere in the world, except where adherence to it would result in contravention of local laws.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment or any student’s contract with the University and it may be amended at any time.

3. Responsibility for the policy

The University Executive Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the Director of Human Resources (for staff) and the Director of Student Services (for students) supported by the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion.

All managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the University's values, aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. Staff will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness commensurate with their duties. The University may also require students to be trained appropriately under this policy.

This policy is reviewed annually. Any substantial changes to it will be made in consultation with the University and College Union, the University of Reading Staff Forum and Reading University Students' Union and will be approved by the University Executive Board.

Staff and students are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion.

The University will monitor the application of and compliance with this policy and will publish an annual equality report each year to assess the progress made in achieving its equality and diversity objectives.

4. Discrimination

You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, students, job applicants, student applicants, officers, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies when on University premises, outside the University premises (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work or study-related contacts), on work or University-related trips or events (including work-related social events or student social events under the University's banner) and on social media.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of the applicant's sexuality or failing to offer a student a place because of the student's religious views.

Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but

adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.

Harassment: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy and in the student Regulations for Conduct.

Victimisation: retaliation against anyone to whom this policy applies who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

The Appendices to this Policy set out the University's policy concerning certain activity relating to staff (Appendix 1), students (Appendix 2) and its estate (Appendix 3). The Appendices form part of this Policy.

5. Disabilities

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

Students and applicants - the Disability Advisory Service is available to advise individual applicants and students as well as advising the counselling service, Schools, Functions, departments and individual staff on specific adjustments that may be appropriate for particular students or helping Schools and Functions develop plans for how they might support students with disabilities.

Employees, workers and job applicants - if you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your line manager or the relevant Human Resources Partner to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager or the relevant Human Resources Partner may wish to consult with you, your medical adviser or the University's Occupational Health Adviser about possible adjustments.

We will consider and make reasonable adjustments for all those to whom this policy applies as appropriate, in each particular case. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and seek an alternative solution

where possible.

6. Breaches of this policy

We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant staff or student disciplinary procedures. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal for employees and withdrawal from the University for students.

Employees, workers and job applicants can raise allegations of discrimination through the Grievance Procedure or through our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate. Students or applicants should raise a complaint under the Student Complaints Procedure or the Student Disciplinary Procedure. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff or students who complain about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedures.

7. Related policies

This policy is supported by the following related policies and procedures:

- Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Flexible Working Procedure
- Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave Policies
- Parental Leave Policy
- Time Off for Dependants Policy
- Homeworking Policy
- Career Break Policy
- Prevent Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Policy and Procedures for Supporting Trans Staff and Students
- Recruitment Policy
- Admissions Policy Covering Taught Programmes At Undergraduate And Postgraduate Level
- Admissions Policy Covering Postgraduate Research Programmes
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Inclusive Teaching and Learning Policy

Appendix 1 – Employees

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment, promotion, and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be carried out in accordance with the University's policies and procedures and will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination.

Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

Job applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made except where it is necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments). Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check.

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the Human Resources Department or UK Visas and Immigration.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, we monitor information provided by applicants, including about some Protected Characteristics. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before shortlisting and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

Training and promotion and conditions of service

Employees will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the University and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit in accordance with University policies and procedures.

Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that

they are available to all who should have access to them.

The University operates a pay system that is transparent, based on objective criteria and free from unlawful bias. The University uses the Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) System in relation to roles in grades 1 – 8 and Korn Ferry in relation to professional services roles in grade 9, and publishes annual Diversity and Inclusion Reports which include pay data.

Termination of employment

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objectives and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

Part-time and fixed-term work

Part-time and fixed-term staff will not be treated less favourably than comparable full-time or permanent staff and will enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

Appendix 2 – Students

Admissions

The University is committed to the principles of fair admissions and fair access through the recruitment of students with the greatest academic ability and potential, irrespective of their social, cultural or economic background, as laid out in the Admissions Policy covering taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, available [here](#).

The University confirms its commitment to a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities in which individuals are admitted, developed and otherwise treated on the basis of the applicant's relevant merits and abilities and are given equal opportunities within the University.

No applicant shall be treated more or less favourably than any other on the grounds of a Protected Characteristic or because they have spent time in care.

Selection

In deciding whether to offer a place to an applicant, the University will treat each application on its individual merits. It will take a range of information supplied in the submitted application into account when identifying an applicant's suitability for, and likely ability to meet the demands of, the programme for which the applicant has applied.

Where applicants submit their completed application before any relevant published deadline, including the UCAS deadline for the receipt of "on-time" applications, the University will ensure that equal consideration is given to all applications received prior to that deadline for the relevant academic year of study.

In order to embed an ethos of equality of opportunity in the Admissions process, staff directly involved in assessing applications for admission to the University will be required to undertake training in the avoidance of unconscious bias.

Admissions Tutors or designated Admissions Staff may arrange interviews for applicants, or request the submission of a portfolio of work in order to assist in evaluating their suitability to meet the demands of their intended programme. Where applicants are required to attend an interview, performance at interview will be used in conjunction with the submitted application, when making a decision. The University will try to give at least two weeks' notice of the date of any interview to applicants. Where travel to the University is impractical, for instance where an applicant lives overseas, wherever possible, alternate arrangements, such as online (video) or phone interview will be offered. All interviews are conducted in line with the principles of equality of opportunity as contained within this policy.

The University does not normally employ Admissions Tests as part of its selection methods. However, should a test be required this will be made known to potential applicants.

An applicant who meets the general or standard entry requirements as indicated in Section seven of the University's [Admissions Policy covering taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level](#), in our printed materials or on the website is not guaranteed an offer of a place.

As part of the selection process, an applicant's fee status will be determined by the University's Admissions Office in accordance with the regulations set out by the Government.

Applicants with disabilities and additional support needs

The University welcomes applications from students with disabilities. Applications from students with disabilities are assessed following the standard procedures contained in the University's [Admissions policy covering taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level](#) and consideration of support requirements will remain entirely separate. If an offer is made, an assessment of needs is carried out to ensure that the University can provide the required support.

Mature students

The University welcomes applications from mature students and may waive the general entrance requirements where evidence of the applicant's potential to complete the chosen programme of study successfully is provided. Applicants who have been out of formal education for a number of years, normally three years or more prior to the date of admission, will normally be expected to show evidence of recent academic study in order to be considered for admission. In such cases the University would accept, for example, a GCE A level or an Access to Higher Education Diploma.

Placements and study abroad

The University makes reasonable endeavours to ensure that all students have access to opportunities for work placements and to study abroad. Where the University is responsible for selection to work placement or study abroad opportunities, it will do so on the basis of merit and ensure that students are provided with comparable opportunities and experiences as far as possible and within the law.

The University will also take reasonable steps to ensure that placement providers and those providing study abroad opportunities put in place arrangements that are proportionate and transparent. So far as the University is reasonably able to do so, it will required such providers to comply with relevant equality legislation.

Assessment

The University will ensure that no unlawful discrimination exists in our assessment policies and practices.

We will make reasonable adjustments to assessment methods to meet the needs of disabled students as appropriate.

Provision of Student Support Services

For all undergraduate and postgraduate students, student support services, including access to student welfare guidance, counselling and mental health support, study advice, careers advice and assistance with work placements, will operate under this policy. Opportunities to engage in personal and professional development schemes will also be operated under this policy.

Part-time and distance learning students will have equal and proportionate access to student support services as comparable full-time students.

Religion, belief and teaching and learning

The University will take such steps as are reasonable and practicable to ensure that no student of the University is put at a disadvantage because of their religion or belief. Where students have a religious or other belief which conflicts with their normal obligations to the University, alternative strategies and/or arrangements will be considered in consultation with the student, in so far as such alternatives are reasonable and practicable, so that the student is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. In particular the University may allow a student whose religion or beliefs require absence from an academic activity at a specific time to perform this activity at another time or make alternative reasonable adjustments.

If a student's religion or belief totally prevents them from taking part in a particular academic activity including examinations and assessments at any time and the activity is a minor part of a module or programme the University shall attempt to provide an alternative activity, or, failing that, attempt to adjust any examination, assessment or other arrangements so that the student is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged.

If the activity in which a student's religion or belief prevents them taking part will form a major part of a module or programme, or may be a key theory, technique or principle of the discipline concerned, it may not be possible to make alternative arrangements without compromising the academic integrity of the programme or module.

What is reasonable and practicable will vary on a case by case basis. Not all requests will be able to be accommodated for good reason but the University undertakes that every reasonable effort will be made to come to a workable arrangement.

Appendix 3 – Facilities

The University intends that the provision of its facilities and services are free of unlawful discrimination.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises and the manner in which we provide services to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve access.

In addition to taking reasonable steps to remove barriers to facilities and services, where appropriate, the University may also provide services and facilities to support particular sections of our community.

The Chaplaincy Centre offers a signposting service for different faiths, with information about places of worship both on campus and in Reading itself (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/chaplaincy/>). Additionally, there is a Muslim Prayer Centre on campus and Atheist/Humanist/Secularist, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh student-run societies operated through Reading University Students' Union.

The University provides spaces on campus that any member of staff or any student may book. The University's usual room booking mechanisms should be followed in order to do this and no requests for space are treated differently on the grounds of a Protected Characteristic. All University policies concerning the use of space on campus must be followed.

If a third party is to be speaking at an event on the University's campus [the University's External Speaker Policy](#) must be adhered to and the External Speaker Code of Practice must be provided to the third party. An event includes any gathering that involves an external speaker addressing a group, including in a teaching, learning or research setting (class, conference, seminar) or in the context of an extracurricular activity.

Version control

VERSION	SECTION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVING AUTHORITY	APPROVAL DATE	START DATE	NEXT REVIEW
1.0	AGS	The University Secretary	Annually	UEB	10/07/2017		July 2018
1.1	AGS	The University Secretary	Annually	UEB	26/09/2022		September 2023