Equality and Diversity Policy

## Reasons for having this policy

The University of Cambridge Students’ Union (Cambridge SU) is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive culture for:

* all those who need our services
* our volunteers
* our staff and
* other stakeholders.

We recognise the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and fairness, and challenging discrimination.

We welcome our legal duties not to discriminate as a union and an employer. We aim to go beyond the narrow scope of legislative compliance and follow best practice, making equality, fairness and diversity a fundamental part of all our activities.

We recognise people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions, and we wish to encourage and harness these differences to make our services more relevant and approachable.

Cambridge SU will not discriminate or tolerate discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of race, colour, sex, gender identity, disability, nationality, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, marital/partnership or family status, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, social class, educational background, employment status, working pattern, trade union membership or any other factor.

SCOPE

This policy relates to all aspects of work undertaken by Cambridge SU including employment, recruitment and selection, meeting students’ needs and service delivery, dealing with volunteers, suppliers, supporters and other associated third parties.

## Legal obligations

In valuing diversity, Cambridge SU is committed to go beyond the legal minimum regarding equality. Volunteers do not fall within the scope of the legislation listed below. However, this list serves to illustrate to volunteers the framework within which the union operates and that we are committed to providing our services in way which is non-discriminatory and which values diversity.

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises and strengthens and replaces most previous equality legislation. The following legislation is still relevant:

• The Human Rights Act 1998.

• The Work and Families Act 2006.

• Employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended).

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 gives transsexual people full recognition in their acquired sex in law for all purposes. A person’s transgender status cannot lawfully be disclosed without their consent. Information about transgender status is sensitive data within the meaning of the GDPR and therefore can be processed only in limited circumstances. This applies to employment records.

## Meeting STUDents’ needs

We are committed to treating all students equally and fairly and to not discriminating unlawfully against them. We will also, wherever possible, take steps to promote equal opportunity. We will ensure that students:

* are able to access the union in ways that suit them
* are given help that is relevant to their problem and situation
* are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination
* have their needs listened to, and met whenever possible

Cambridge SU is committed to meeting the diverse needs of students. We will take steps to identify the needs of students at Cambridge and develop policies and procedures accordingly. We aim to ensure that the services we provide are accessible to all. We will take account, in particular, the needs of students with a disability (including mental health problems) and students who are unable to communicate effectively in English, including those who are deaf who use BSL and who are hard of hearing. We will consider whether particular groups are predominant within our client base and devise appropriate policies / procedures to meet their needs. Such groups include: men and women; carers; older people; members of religious groups; ethnic groups or nationalities; and lesbian, gay or transgender people.

## Employment (Paid staff and Volunteers)

As an employer, Cambridge SU will treat all employees and job applicants equally and fairly and not unlawfully discriminate against them. This will, for example, include arrangements for recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, access to training opportunities, access to promotions and transfers, grievance and disciplinary processes, selections for redundancy, references and any other employment related activities.

## Recruitment and selection

We recognise the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to ensure that:

* we endeavour to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates practicable
* employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit
* where appropriate, positive action measures are taken to attract applicants from all sections of society and especially from those underrepresented in the workforce
* selection criteria and processes do not unlawfully discriminate
* where appropriate and necessary lawful exemption (genuine occupation requirements) will be used to recruit suitable staff to meet the special needs of particular groups
* any third parties acting for Cambridge SU in respect of employment are made aware of the requirements not to discriminate and to act accordingly.

## Training and development

We will ensure that all employees are encouraged to achieve their full potential. Selection for all training and career development opportunities will be purely on the basis of merit. Appraisals of performance will be conducted objectively and on time.

## Meeting individual needs

Cambridge SU will do its utmost to meet the needs of individuals at work, for example:

* Recognising caring and domestic responsibilities.
* Working patterns - wherever possible training courses and meetings will be planned to allow attendance by staff working non-standard hours / working patterns.
* Disability – reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary to remove barriers and enable disabled staff to carry out their roles.
* Religious practices – time off and suitable facilities for prayer will be provided wherever possible. Requests for annual leave to celebrate religious festivals will be accommodated wherever possible.

## Volunteers

Volunteers contribute significantly to the diversity of the organisation. They can expect to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination. They are likewise expected to treat others fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination. Due to the restrictions imposed by employment law, volunteers are not entitled to the same rights and protections as employees.

## Conduct and general standards of behaviour

All staff are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. Cambridge SU will not tolerate behavior such as:

* making threats
* physical violence
* shouting
* swearing at others
* persistent rudeness
* isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people
* telling offensive jokes or name calling
* displaying offensive material such as pornography or sexist / racist cartoons, or the distribution of such material via email / text message or any other format.
* any other forms of harassment or victimisation.

The items on the above list of unacceptable behaviours are considered to be disciplinary offences within Cambridge SU and can lead to disciplinary action being taken.

For more details about disciplinary and grievance matters see the Cambridge SU Disciplinary and Grievance policies.

Cambridge SU does, however, encourage staff to resolve misunderstandings and problems informally wherever possible, depending on the circumstances. However, whether dealt with informally or formally, it is important for staff who may have caused offence to understand that it is no defence to say that they did not intend to do so, or to blame individuals for being over sensitive. It is the impact of the behaviour, rather than the intent, that counts, and that should shape the solution found both to the immediate problem and to preventing further similar problems in the future.

Complaints of discrimination

Cambridge SU will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination on any forbidden grounds made by employees, volunteers, clients or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the organisation’s grievance, complaints or disciplinary procedure, as appropriate and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

We will also monitor the number and outcomes of complaints of discrimination made by staff, volunteers, clients and other third parties.

Monitoring

Cambridge SU will monitor and record diversity information about staff and volunteers, including trustees, on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity and disability.

Where it is possible to do so, and where doing so will not cause offence or discomfort to those whom it is intended to protect, we will monitor the sexual orientation and religion or belief of staff and volunteers so to ensure that they are not being discriminated against in terms of the opportunities or benefits available to them.

We will store diversity monitoring data as confidential personal data and restrict access to this information. Diversity monitoring information will be used exclusively for the purposes of diversity monitoring and will have no bearing on opportunities or benefits.

At least once a year, we will monitor all elements of:

* recruitment and selection processes (including profiles of successful and unsuccessful job applicants)
* promotion and transfer
* training
* terms and conditions of employment
* take up of benefits (e.g. flexible working requests)
* grievance and disciplinary procedures
* resignations, redundancies and dismissals.

*Date of review: June 2021*