

Union

Union School of Theology Equal Opportunities Policy

Approved by Union School of Theology (UST) Academic Board 17-01-2018

Reviewed October 2020

Policy reviewed by Academic Board [September 27th 2022].

Version 1.1. reviewed and approved by AB on 23rd May 2023

POLICY FRAMEWORK

This policy has been formulated alongside the following policies:

- [UST Programme Handbooks;](#)
- [UST Admissions Policy;](#)
- [UST Complaints Policy;](#)
- [UST Code of Conduct;](#)
- [QAA 'UK Quality Code for Higher Education;](#)
- [Open University Handbook for Validated Awards;](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)

THE POLICY

Union School of Theology is an evangelical Christian organisation which is committed to being a fair and just community of learning and scholarship. Within our ethos, we are creating an inclusive community where people are treated with dignity and respect, where inequalities are challenged, and where we anticipate, and respond positively to, different needs and circumstances, so that everyone can achieve their potential. This policy is founded on the Christian teaching that each person is made in the image of God and is of equal value and worth in God's sight. UST's mission and values require it to create a positive environment in which all staff and students, present and prospective, are respected, are provided with development and progression opportunities, and can make the most of their abilities.

UST provides an environment where staff and students from different cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, both within Wales, the UK and overseas are welcomed for the rich and valuable diversity they bring. We recognise that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture, and that this difference, when nurtured appropriately, brings great strength.

UST is committed to ensuring that unlawful direct or indirect discrimination based on characteristics or circumstances such as age, race, colour, religion or belief, ethnic or national origin, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability is avoided. We are also committed to avoiding discrimination on grounds of socio-economic background. Direct discrimination consists of treating another person less favourably than others on one or more of the above grounds. Indirect discrimination occurs when a non-essential condition or requirement is applied equally to all, but serves to disadvantage a particular group or individual.

We respect the rights of individuals, including the right to hold different views and beliefs. We will not allow these differences to be manifested in a way that is hostile or degrading to others.

UST is committed to equality of opportunity in employment practice, policies, procedures and provision of courses and services to students, staff and visitors. We expect commitment and involvement from all our staff, students, partners and providers of goods and services in working towards the achievement of our vision.

UST policies and procedures, when being developed, reviewed and updated, will be subject to Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) checks. UST recognises that a policy or procedure may unintentionally disadvantage a particular protected characteristic (age, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment). Accordingly, when a policy is updated an EIA check and comment will be included as required.

UST students should treat all members of the Union community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs; challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying; respond positively and inclusively to individual differences.

UST employees should treat all members of the Union community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs; challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying; respond positively and inclusively to individual differences; anticipate and respond positively to the different needs and circumstances of members of our community; apply equality and diversity principles through everyday activities; ensure our equality policy is up to date, and undertake any training provided. The School will identify and root out any unfair or unlawful discrimination which denies individuals opportunities on any of these grounds.

All those involved in producing and delivering teaching and assessment materials will anticipate and respond to the needs of disabled students or who are from different backgrounds when developing learning outcomes and materials; develop materials with the needs of the audience in mind, recognising the full diversity of the student body, ensuring each individual is treated with dignity and respect. Any alleged acts by UST staff members which breach UST's policy will be fully investigated, and if proven may be treated as gross misconduct. If anyone is victimised as a result of making a complaint, disciplinary action will be taken.

UST line managers will ensure the School's equality vision and scheme are communicated to potential employees and new staff through the recruitment and induction processes; disseminate accessible information to ensure employees including external lecturers are aware of their responsibilities; identify and respond to equal opportunities staff development needs: support individual needs and circumstances of staff so they can perform effectively: set appropriate equality related objectives for their staff.

The UST Provost will where relevant, include equality and diversity development actions in the School's Strategic Plan; ensure that implications for equal opportunities are considered in changes to strategy, policy, procedure and practice; champion, sponsor and promote equality and diversity; ensure institutional compliance with equality legislation; assess and report progress against agreed equality action plans.

Union School of Theology's Senior Management Team will

- a) break down any barriers to equality of opportunity, which may prevent members of the School realising their full potential;
- b) promptly and fully investigate all complaints of discrimination and harassment, taking appropriate action where necessary;
- c) ensure that all staff and students are fully informed of this policy and that outside agencies employed by UST are also informed of it;

The Union Board of Trustees will satisfy itself that Union School of Theology is fully compliant with its equality duties;

keep under review the composition of the School community and the effects of its recruitment practices, and compare these with those of the community it serves; request further information from the UST staff where reassurance is needed; request an annual Equal Opportunities Report from the Union School of Theology.

As an evangelical Christian organisation, there are several exceptions in the Equality Act 2010 which allow UST to apply restrictions in certain circumstances and to uphold its ethos. For example, the Christian ethos of the organisation and nature or context of work in the organisation may mean that an occupational requirement (Equality Act 2010) applies to some posts.

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Provost and Senior Management Team.

Version	Author	Review Date	Reason for change	Equality Impact Assessment check (and comment)	AB Approval date *
1.1	Iain McGee	Sept 2022	New paragraph 'UST Policies and Procedures' ensure policies are subject to EIA checks.	Includes specific requirements for EIA checks	27/9/22
1.2	Iain McGee	Mar 2023	Update on language used for disability and protected characteristics noted.	Checked	23 rd May 2023