

Policy on Sexual Orientation

Purpose

The University of Chichester's Equality and Diversity Policy sets out its core values and commitment to equality and fair treatment where discrimination and disadvantage in all its forms is effectively challenged. Whilst the Policy encompasses all protected characteristics, research conducted by the Equality Challenge Unit in 2009 revealed significant discrimination and negative treatment of LGB staff and students working in higher education institutions continues. It was therefore felt important that in light of the research, the University reviews its separate policy on sexual orientation, which demonstrates its commitment and support to its LGB community.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy and the University's Dignity at Work Policy (Staff) or Disciplinary Procedure for Student Complaints (Students).

Statement of Policy

The University values its students, staff and visitors equally, regardless of their sexual orientation. It aims to create an environment in which everyone, whatever their sexual orientation, feel equally welcome and valued, and in which homophobic behaviour is not tolerated.

It is recognised that students and staff will hold a range of views on same-sex relationships, as do the doctrines of some religions. This policy does not seek to infringe anyone's rights to hold these views, but does seek to prevent them from being manifested in such a way that offends, intimidates, humiliates, or is hostile or degrading to others.

The University recognises the extent of heterosexist assumptions in society, and the existence of homophobia.

Through the implementation of relevant policies and procedures the University seeks to ensure that:

1. Student recruitment, admission and progression is based entirely on relevant national Higher Education criteria, which under no circumstances would include sexual orientation.
2. Staff recruitment, progression and promotion is based entirely on relevant criteria, which under no circumstances would include sexual orientation.
3. Everyone is treated with equal dignity and fairness regardless of their sexual orientation.
4. Homophobic abuse, harassment or bullying is a serious disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure. Examples of harassment and bullying include: engaging in "banter", casual use of the word "gay" or "lesbian" in a derogatory context, name-calling, jokes that are degrading to a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation, unacceptable or unwanted behaviour, intrusive questions.
5. The University will not tolerate any form of homophobic propaganda and will take action against any student or member of staff responsible for it in whatever form it takes e.g. written materials, graffiti, songs or speeches. The University will also remove immediately any written propaganda whenever it appears on the premises.
6. The University will provide a supportive environment for students and staff who wish it to be known that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual ("LGB"). However, it is the right of individuals to choose whether they wish to be open about their sexuality; to 'out' someone without their permission is a form of harassment and will be treated as such.
7. No assumption will be made that partners of students and staff are of the opposite sex. Wherever possible, employment benefits for staff will apply equally to same sex partners.
8. LGB issues will be included in all equality training of staff and students.

9. The Gender Equality Group will monitor incidents and complaints of harassment and will ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

Responsibilities

Managers: All managers are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and challenge behaviours that support LGB discrimination

Students and Staff: All individual students and staff members are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy.

Visitors and contractors: All visitors and contractors have a responsibility not to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Reporting

- If a student or member of staff feels that such discrimination is occurring/has occurred, or
- If a student or member of staff feels that they have not been treated fairly in accordance with this Policy,

they should report the matter immediately to:

- Executive Dean or Deputy Dean for students
- Human Resources for staff

The person acting on behalf of the University will take appropriate steps to deal with it.

Support

If you are hesitant to report a matter and wish to speak to someone in confidence outside of your Department the following support is available to students and staff:

- Students' LGBT Society
- Students' Union
- Student Support Services
- Chaplain
- Equality and Diversity Office
- Member of the Gender & LGB Equality Group

Contact details for the above can be viewed on the Equality page of Portia or linking to the Department via the University's intranet or internet.

Monitoring and Review

Implementation of this policy will be kept under review by the Gender & LGB Equality Group.