

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy

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<i>n.n</i>	<i>24/10/25</i>	<i>To include newly introduced Freedom of Speech Act 2023.</i>	<i>Samantha Grady/Valerie De Saegher</i>	<i>For approval</i>
	12/08/2026	Updated student support email address to wellbeingdisability@regents.ac.uk.	Heather Smith	

1. Introduction

This policy mirrors the approach to equality by the UK Government and with the aim of:

- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

We're also aligning ourselves to the OfS mission to '*ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers*'.

This policy outlines our commitment across the whole university with an internal and external focus. Internally, we are creating an inclusive working and studying environment where differences are valued, and equality of opportunity is advanced. Externally our focus is on continuing to deliver a fair service to our students and visitors by meeting the changing needs of global diverse communities.

2. Equality Statement

Regent's University London is fully committed to respect and fair treatment of everyone, eliminating discrimination and actively promoting equality of opportunity and delivering fairness to all.

In addition to being compliant with the equality laws, public duties, and Human Rights Acts (Universal and European), we also support diversity and promote equality of opportunity for all colleagues, students and visitors regardless of their:

- Protected Characteristic (Equality Act):
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender Reassignment
 - Marriage and Civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and Maternity (including Paternity)
 - Race (colour, ethnic or national background)
 - Religion or Belief (including non-belief)
 - Sex
 - Sexual Orientation
- Caring responsibilities for a 'Protected Characteristic' including dependents
- Socio-economic background/grouping
- Union activity
- Unrelated spent criminal convictions

The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy outlines the responsibility for promoting inclusive environments, which are free from discrimination for our colleagues; students; and anyone associated with the University (e.g. visitors, contractors and service providers).

3. Commitment to Equality

We aim to ensure that equality is embedded in all our functions, operations, and activities. Initiatives to support the embedding process are facilitated by all, but particularly by the university's Human Resources department and Student Experience & Wellbeing team.

4. Assessing the Equality of Opportunity and Fairness

We are committed to promoting and monitoring fairness and equality of opportunity and for any change initiative or new policy it will look to consider the impact on equality.

5. Responsibilities and Commitment

We are all responsible for our own behaviour and must accept the principle that there is equality of opportunity and fairness for all colleagues and students, and anyone associated with the University (e.g. visitors, contractors and service providers), in all aspects of university life.

We must ensure we do not support unfair behaviour by ignoring what is happening around us and must not incite or collude with unfair or unlawful discrimination.

Any member of the University found to be responsible for inciting, perpetrating or colluding with discrimination or harassment may face disciplinary action.

All colleagues, students and anyone associated with the University, have a responsibility to adhere to this statement and apply it in their day-to-day work. The specific responsibilities in relation to this statement are as follows:

1. The Vice Chancellor & CEO is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the University fulfils its legal responsibilities for promoting equality and eliminating discrimination, and for making sure that the commitments within this statement are fulfilled.
2. The Vice-Chancellor's Executive Team, having the overall leadership for running the University, has the responsibility to ensure that the responsibilities for promoting equality and eliminating discrimination, and for making sure that the commitments within this statement are fulfilled across the University.
3. The Chief People Officer is responsible for implementation of this statement with respect to colleagues and for implementing related policies and procedures and ensuring that all colleagues receive appropriate equality and diversity inclusion training.
4. The Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, responsible for Student Services, is responsible for the implementation of this statement with respect to students and for implementing related policies and procedures.
5. Academic Heads & Directors have a responsibility to raise the profile of the policy within their area/direct reports and ensure that all colleagues and students are aware of the commitments within the policy. They also have a responsibility to promote equality of opportunity and to eliminate discrimination within their area/direct reports
6. All colleagues and students have a responsibility to promote equality and to eliminate discrimination on the grounds listed in section 2 and to adhere to the *Equality Statement*. Any act of discrimination or harassment by a colleague or a student will be taken very seriously and may result in disciplinary action being taken.

6. Monitoring

Monitoring will be essential to ensure that our *Equality Statement* is working effectively. To achieve this, we will, through the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee monitor annually and publish details of:

- the profile of the colleagues and student population across the 'protected characteristics'
- student applications, offers made, acceptances, assessment results, drop-out rates and awards of degrees
- recruitment and selection, leavers, promotion, re-grading and participation in training and development activities
- complaints, including harassment and bullying complaints, grievances and disciplinary proceedings for colleagues and students.

We guarantee that information gathered for the purposes of monitoring will be used only for monitoring and to improve its equality performance and will be held and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). If the numbers represented in certain categories are too small (less than 5), we would not report on it to protect anonymity.

7. Freedom of Speech & Academic Freedom

In accordance with UK legislation (Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023) ('the Act') we are required to take steps that are reasonably practicable, to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. We take as a starting point that all speech is lawful, i.e. 'within the law', unless restricted by law. This includes provisions of the Equality Act 2010 prohibiting discrimination. It also includes common law on confidentiality and privacy.

The Act states that universities are core to the pursuit of knowledge and challenge of conventional wisdom and therefore should promote a culture that encourages 'vigorous debate'; even where topics may be contentious or challenging. We recognise that freedom of speech and academic freedom can support the fostering of an inclusive learning environment where diverse perspectives can be expressed and respectfully challenged.

The Act protects free speech within the law, this includes lawful speech that some may find offensive or hurtful. Lawful expression of ideas and opinions, even if offensive or hurtful to some, does not in itself constitute harassment.

However, it does not protect unlawful speech including speech that amounts to unlawful harassment; unlawful incitement to hatred/violence; or speech that violates the Terrorism Act 2000.

Academic freedom relates to academic colleagues and is defined as 'freedom within the law: a) to question and test received wisdom, and: b) to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions. Academic freedom exercised in the context of teaching activity should normally meet standards of academic rigour and approved course specifications. This does not restrict lawful expression of controversial or speculative ideas in pursuit of academic inquiry

Colleagues in senior leadership positions should consider whether their speech could be construed as expressing the views or policies of Regent's as an organisation or to have a 'chilling effect' on lawful speech/expression. If this is likely, mitigating steps should be put in place such as clarifying when views expressed are personal and not institutional policy, and avoiding actions that could deter lawful speech.

8. Complaints of Discrimination or Harassment

It's important to remember that discrimination can take many forms; it could be an online comment, a face-to-face discussion, a comment on social media, in a classroom or in an online meeting.

- If a colleague feels that they have been discriminated against, or that they are being bullied or harassed, the complaint should be raised in accordance with the University's Grievance Procedure.
- If a student feels that they have been discriminated against, or that they are being bullied or harassed, the complaint should be raised in accordance with guidance [here](#).

Guidance on definitions of harassment are outlined in the *Dignity at Work - Tackling Bullying, Harassment & Sexual Misconduct* policy. If witnessing any type of discrimination, colleagues have a responsibility to report it, students are encouraged to report it.

When considering complaints relating to breach of this policy, we will give regard to whether the conduct is within the scope of the person's lawful academic freedom and/or lawful freedom of speech, and/or their protected beliefs under the Equality Act 2010.

Advice on the use of these procedures can be obtained from the Human Resources and Student Experience & Wellbeing team.

Whilst lawful speech is protected, some individuals may still find certain expressions distressing. Support is available:

Colleagues can speak to their line manager, a colleague in the Human resources department (HR@regents.ac.uk), a mental health first aider or call Benenden Health mental health helpline – 0800 414 8247

Students can speak with our Student Support and Wellbeing team on wellbeingdisability@regents.ac.uk or 0207 487 7863 or speak with our partners, Spectrum Life, 24/7, through WhatsApp - Text 'Hi' to 07418 360 780; Phone on 0800 0318227 (UK) or 00353 1518 0277 (international).

8. Supporting Policies & Guidance

We have a range of policies and guidance that support the underlying principles of this policy. For further information refer to the Human Resources intranet pages and Student Experience & Wellbeing team.