

Equal Opportunities Policy

The University of Sheffield is an equal opportunities employer

Our equal opportunities statement

The University of Sheffield is committed to building a diverse community of staff (and students) that recognises and values the abilities, backgrounds, beliefs and ways of living for everyone. Our culture should ensure all members of the University community feel they belong and are treated with respect. We are committed to providing equality of opportunity with regard to our policies and practices across all aspects of employment. We do not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the protected characteristics of age, race, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief and marriage or civil partnership.

Our commitment to equal opportunities

Purpose and scope

This policy aims to ensure that the University treats all employees and job applicants fairly, in line with The Equality Act (2010).

It includes measures that the University will undertake to eliminate unfair treatment at work and prevent discrimination; and covers how the University strives to create a positive and equitable workplace environment and how our staff contribute to this.

It applies to job applicants and all employees as well as atypical/casual workers, visiting academics/researchers, honorary staff, emeritus staff, agency staff and self-employed /consultancy/independent contractors undertaking work with the University.

Our Equal Opportunities Policy accompanies our **Staff Code of Conduct** and other relevant policies as outlined below and is governed by and shall be applied in accordance with the University's obligations to secure, and promote the importance of, freedom of speech within the law and (for academic staff) academic freedom within the law as set out in [our code of practice on freedom of speech and academic freedom](#) ("the Code").

No disciplinary sanction shall be imposed on a member of staff by reference to this Policy without

consideration of whether doing so would be an infringement of their right of freedom of speech, or (where applicable) academic freedom, within the law. That assessment will involve an objective assessment of the facts and context relevant to the case and consideration of the factors in paragraph 3 of the Code.

Legal framework and compliance

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against individuals in the workplace based on the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability including mental health
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

All staff receive training on the Equality Act 2010, including definitions of the different forms of unlawful discrimination as they appear in the Act.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is a legal obligation placed on public authorities in the UK to actively consider and promote equality of opportunity when carrying out their functions. As a public research university, it requires us to ensure that we have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Responsibilities

The University is committed to building a diverse community of staff (and students) that recognises and values the abilities, backgrounds, beliefs and ways of living for everyone. Our culture should ensure all members of the University community feel they belong and are treated with respect.

This commitment is stated in our University Vision Strategic Plan and the [One University](#) pillar of

our plan outlines how we strive to achieve this.

The [staff code of conduct: living our values](#) supports our ongoing conversation about how we create a positive working environment for everyone and outlines additional expectations for University leaders and managers. It is easy to use and complements and signposts to relevant policies, including our [code of practice on freedom of speech and academic freedom](#).

Recruitment and Selection

The University will state its commitment to equal opportunities on recruitment and talent attraction information, including job advertisements and web pages presented to prospective applicants.

When a job is advertised externally the job vacancy will be listed as standard practice on the following web pages: [University of Sheffield jobsite](#), [Diversity Dashboard](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Jobs.ac.uk](#) and [UK government Find a job](#). In addition, vacancies may also be advertised on other paid and free of charge webpages and publications if appropriate and necessary in order to attract candidates with the required skills and experience.

The University is fully committed to equal opportunities and aims to recruit and maintain a diverse workforce. To help us monitor how effective we are in doing this, and to enable us to meet legal requirements, we ask applicants to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form as part of their application.

We give fair consideration to all applicants for employment, supported through the use of transparent procedures. This includes the use of job descriptions and person specifications to clarify the purpose and duties of a post and enable the provision of objective selection criteria, thereby ensuring appointments are based on individual merit.

The University provides comprehensive guidance and training for all those involved in the recruitment process which includes the use of inclusive recruitment practices. Guidance is provided to colleagues via the Jobs, Recruitment and Selection web pages.

The University promotes positive action initiatives to be used in its recruitment processes to encourage people from under-represented groups to apply for vacancies and overcome disadvantages they may face when competing with other candidates in the selection process. We ensure that any such positive action initiatives comply with the relevant sections of the Equality Act (2010).

Academic staff have the right to academic freedom, which means the freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves at risk of being adversely affected by losing their jobs or

privileges or by the likelihood of securing promotion or obtaining employment at the University. Accordingly, no candidates for an academic job at the University shall be disadvantaged, or treated unfavourably, in relation to their application because they have previously exercised their right to academic freedom within the law, whether at the University or at another Higher Education employer.

Candidates for employment with the University should not be discriminated against because they hold, or have expressed, opinions or beliefs which qualify as protected beliefs under the Equality Act 2010.

Staff Development and Career Progression

The University is committed to offering all members of staff opportunities for **training and development** and **career progression** within the terms of their employment on the basis of their role, relevant qualifications, abilities and performance.

The identification **training and development** requirements and **career progression** opportunities form part of our annual **Staff Review and Development Scheme (SRDS)**. SRDS reviewers receive guidance and training which includes the importance of having due regard to the potential particular needs of staff with protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act (2010).

Staff training and development opportunities are accessible through our **Staff Development Hub**. Our career progression frameworks are accessible through our **Reward and Recognition Hub** pages. All staff involved in career progression decisions receive appropriate guidance and training to ensure that decisions are made fairly and without unfair discrimination.

Equality data is monitored annually to ensure fair application of the process and to identify systemic barriers to progression that will be addressed through our EDI Strategy work.

Reasonable Adjustments

Under the Equality Act, we have a duty to make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled staff and job applicants to ensure equal access to opportunities and employment. Our [disability inclusion hub](#) includes comprehensive guidance best practice on [reasonable adjustments](#).

The University is a certified [Disability Confident](#) employer. A recognition given by the Government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to employers based in Great Britain who have agreed to take action to meet thirteen commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees.

Concerns, complaints and reporting

Any member of staff who experiences or witnesses any form of discrimination such as harassment, abuse, bullying or sexual violence can use our [report + support platform](#) to inform us of concerns and access support and information about reporting options.

Alternatively, staff may use any of the following routes which are also outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct:

- Your line manager
- Another trusted manager or leader
- Human Resources contact
- For early career researchers, via your faculty lead or Early Career Researchers champion
- Head of School
- Your trade union representative (if applicable)

Appropriate action will be taken in line with our Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy. This policy works alongside the principles and expectations in the Staff Code of Conduct and is governed by and shall be applied in accordance with the University's free speech duties as set out in our [code of practice on freedom of speech and academic freedom](#).

Monitoring and review

Version control: reviewed September 2025.

Next planned review: June 2028.