

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Version	1.0
Date last updated:	July 2025
Next update:	July 2026
Category	Regulations
Document Owner:	Head of FE
Publication:	Public

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1. Principles

- 1.1. The UK School of Professional Studies (SPS) believes that a diverse environment, encompassing varied backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and identities, is fundamental to academic excellence, innovation, and enriching the educational experience. This policy affirms our dedication to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and building an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive and reach their full potential.
- 1.2. SPS is committed to:
- **eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation** and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010,
 - **advancing equality of opportunity** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,
 - **fostering good relations** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Within this policy, protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity that are legally protected from discrimination under the Equality Act; these are detailed in Appendix A: Definitions.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all aspects of SPS' work as a learning provider and as an employer, however we consider the following to be of particular significance:
- I. The **selection and admission of learners**,
 - II. The **appointment, development, advancement and remuneration of staff and governors**,
 - III. The **accessibility of our learning opportunities** offered by the School to all who can benefit from them,
 - IV. The **accessibility of our facilities** to all that use them,
 - V. The **overall culture within SPS** and attitudes it promotes through its educational and professional work,
 - VI. The **provision of support and guidance to students and staff**,

VII. the treatment of people who are undergoing **disciplinary proceedings** or official investigations.

2.2. SPS does not tolerate any form of abusive or discriminatory behaviour, regardless of whether such behaviour is deliberate or inadvertent. Such behaviour will be considered as a breach of the School's Code of Conduct, warranting action under the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

3. Embedding our Approach to EDI

3.1. In relation to the above aims, SPS will achieve its policy aims by:

- Promoting its values of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion to members of SPS' community and embedding them within its teaching and learning practices,
- Setting mechanisms for effective oversight and evaluation of the accessibility of learning and employment opportunities,
- Fostering a culture within the School where people can feel confident about raising issues around equality, diversity, and inclusion, and providing means of doing so,
- Establishing and maintaining an admissions process which is supportive of the needs of all students and provides for assessment of learning support for those students who may have special needs,
- Making reasonable adjustments and adaptations to its learning opportunities and facilities where practicable,
- Considering and assessing the impact of its decisions on particular groups who may be disadvantaged or excluded,
- Ensuring fair and sound investigative procedures are in place to review potential breaches of this policy and take remedial action,
- Providing appropriate support to anyone who has been unlawfully discriminated against.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. SPS's Governing Body is ultimately accountable for compliance with the Equality Act and for ensuring that SPS achieves the policy aims set out herein. It will do this by reviewing statistical information regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, such as:
- Data on student enrolments and attainment with regard to the prevalence of people with protected characteristics
 - The diversity of job applicants, shortlisted candidates, new appointments, academic promotions, student applications, admissions and attainment
 - The diversity and makeup of the School's organs of governance
 - Other information, concerns or risks about equality, diversity of inclusion received through feedback, complaints, grievances, surveys etc.
- 4.2. This information will be monitored as part of the annual Equality Information Report, which will be prepared for the Board of Governors.
- 4.3. The Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that Staff and Students understand the expectations placed on them by this policy and that breaches are investigated in accordance with the appropriate procedure. This includes making the appropriate training and knowledge available.
- 4.4. The Governing Body will also assure itself that equality, diversity and inclusion are actively embedded within the curriculum, teaching practice, learning resources and assessment methods. This includes ensuring that staff design and deliver learning that is accessible, inclusive and free from bias, and that learners from all backgrounds are supported to achieve positive outcomes.
- 4.5. The Governing Body and Senior Management Team will ensure that effective processes for identifying Learner needs, including learning difficulties, disabilities and other barriers to learning, are in place and actively promoted. Appropriate and timely reasonable adjustments, adaptations and support measures will be implemented and reviewed to enable all Learners to participate fully and achieve.

5. Inclusive Recruitment and Admissions

- 5.1. SPS is committed to ensuring that all recruitment and admissions processes are fair, transparent and accessible, and that Learners from all backgrounds have equal opportunity to participate in our programs. In line with the Equality Act

2010, we will take active steps to remove barriers, reduce disadvantage and promote inclusive participation throughout all stages of the learner journey.

5.2. This will be achieved by:

- **Ensuring Transparent and Fair Processes** - Providing clear eligibility and entry criteria
- **Encouraging Participation from Underrepresented Groups** - Promoting courses to a wide range of communities, Identifying gaps in participation and implementing targeted outreach, and monitoring enrolment and progression data to identify disparities
- **Providing Support and Reasonable Adjustments** - Offering prospective Learners the opportunity to disclose learning difficulties, disabilities, mental health conditions, caring responsibilities or other barriers at the point of enquiry, and ensuring that Staff involved in admissions understand how to identify additional needs and respond sensitively and appropriately
- **Ensuring Inclusive Assessment and Selection Processes** - Ensuring that admission decisions are based solely on relevant criteria, and providing alternative formats or pathways where possible to ensure Learners are not unfairly excluded
- **Supporting Learners During Transition into Learning** - Offering clear guidance and induction materials in accessible formats and providing early assessment of support needs to apply adjustments prior to commencement of the course
- **Monitoring, Data and Continuous Improvement** - Reviewing Learner feedback and outcomes to evaluate fairness and inclusivity of the admissions process and using this information to inform quality improvement planning and compliance

6. Employees

Recruitment

- 6.1. SPS aims to attract and recruit employees who are of a high professional calibre and who are appropriately qualified and capable of performing the duties expected of them. It is naturally within the School's interests to appoint the most suitable candidates available to it.

- 6.2. The School will give equal consideration to appropriately qualified applicants during the recruitment process and will not discriminate unlawfully.
- 6.3. The School's criteria for selection will relate to the requirements of the job, relevant qualifications, and relevant experience. The person specification is objective, ensuring that all the criteria included are appropriate and relevant to the performance of the job in question.
- 6.4. Shortlisting and interviewing processes will be thorough, fair and free from discrimination. To support this, SPS will provide training for all employees involved in recruitment and selection to help them understand our processes and make them aware of relevant employment laws.
- 6.5. If an applicant has a reasonable adjustment requirement, SPS will make these to the recruitment and selection process, and if successful in their application, to workplace and working arrangements so the individual can work at the School.
- 6.6. The School will promote best practice in recruitment and selection. It will continuously develop its recruitment and selection practices to allow innovative ideas and approaches to be incorporated.

Pay and Conditions

- 6.7. SPS supports the principle of equality of treatment in employment and is committed to ensuring that procedures to determine the pay, conditions and promotion prospects of all Employees do not discriminate unlawfully and are free from bias.
- 6.8. SPS understands that equal pay between Men and Women is a legal right under UK employment law, and will routinely undertake a Gender pay gap assessment to flag where this is not the case.

Equal pay audits

- 6.9. We conduct equal pay reviews to identify any areas of pay inequality that may require further exploration, and to measure the success of our ongoing activity to diversify our Staff population in relation to Gender and Ethnicity.
- 6.10. We recognise that eradication of pay gaps will be a result of the success of our strategies related to embedding Equity, improving representation, and building an inclusive culture.

Training and development

- 6.11. SPS is committed to ensuring that colleagues are aware of, and are actively implementing, what is required of them to comply with SPS's policies and all relevant legislation.
- 6.12. SPS does not discriminate when providing training and development that allows Staff to carry out their jobs more effectively. This applies to full-time or part-time or on a permanent or fixed-term contract.

7. Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Expectations

- 7.1. SPS ensures that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are embedded across all teaching, learning and assessment. The curriculum is designed and delivered in a way that promotes fairness, removes barriers and supports the success of all learners.
- 7.2. SPS ensures that:
 - Curriculum content is inclusive and accessible, using diverse and representative examples and ensuring materials do not reinforce stereotypes,
 - Teaching methods meet the needs of all learners, with differentiation, clear explanations and adaptations based on learner starting points,
 - Reasonable adjustments are provided promptly and reviewed regularly to support Learners with disabilities, learning difficulties or other needs,
 - Learning environments promote respect and safety, with Staff consistently challenging discriminatory behaviour and fostering a culture of inclusion,
 - Assessment methods are fair and transparent, offering alternative formats where reasonable to do so,
 - Staff receive regular training in inclusive teaching, accessibility and unconscious bias,
 - Data and Learner feedback inform continuous improvement, ensuring the curriculum supports positive outcomes for all groups.

8. Educational and Support Needs

- 8.1. SPS is committed to ensuring fair, inclusive and supportive provision for all Learners, and to dealing in a considerate manner with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) that individual Learners may have.
- 8.2. SPS will ensure that:
- Special arrangements are considered on an individual basis, informed by the Learner's needs, the requirements of the programme, and relevant precedent, ensuring equity and consistency.
 - Learners are encouraged to disclose any disability, learning difficulty or additional need at application, enrolment or at any point during their programme, without fear of discrimination.
 - Staff respond promptly to disclosures, assessing the Learner's needs and the implications for their study, and putting adjustments in place as early as possible.
 - Appropriate evidence may be requested to support the implementation of reasonable adjustments, where required to ensure suitable and effective arrangements.
 - Reasonable adjustments may include accessible learning materials, adapted resources, assistive technologies, flexible assessment arrangements, additional time, or other measures appropriate to the individual.
 - Tutors and Support Staff are informed of the adjustments required to support each Learner, and apply these consistently within teaching, learning and assessment.
 - Additional support needs are recorded securely, and information is shared only with relevant staff
 - Data on the support provided is monitored as part of quality assurance and used to inform continuous improvement.
- 8.3. SPS will ensure that all Learners with additional needs are treated with dignity and respect, and that no learner is disadvantaged as a result of a disability, learning difficulty or other need.

9. Raising a concern or making a complaint

- 9.1. SPS provides several avenues through which concerns about equality, diversity or inclusion may be brought to its attention:
- Prospective students may use the admissions complaints procedure, should they feel they have been unfairly refused a place at the School, or unlawfully discriminated against based on having a protected characteristic.
 - Students should use the SPS Student Complaints Procedure to raise concerns where they feel they have been unfairly excluded or inadvertently discriminated against. Additionally, Students can collectively engage with the management of the School via their elected representatives.
 - Serious and/or deliberate instances of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation may warrant separate investigation. Such cases will be investigated as breaches of the School's Codes of Conduct and the School may take disciplinary action against individuals who behave abusively to members of the School's Academic community.
 - If a member of staff wishes to raise a concern about fair and equal treatment, they should, in the first instance, speak to their line manager or Head of Department, who will consult with the HR Department. If these informal steps do not resolve the issue, the employee should contact their Faculty/Department HR Manager.
 - Severe and systemic breaches of this policy may be notified to the School's senior management using its Protected Disclosure (Whistleblowing) procedures.

10. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech

- 10.1. We value academic freedom, freedom of expression and inclusion. Academic Freedom is an essential part of academic life and flourishes where there is tolerance of, and respect for, a wide range of views and beliefs.
- 10.2. In addition, everyone has the right to freedom of expression within the law. Our legal obligations and our commitment to inclusion demand that we exercise our freedoms responsibly, respectfully and with due regard to the values we share as a community. This means that neither academic freedom nor

freedom of expression can be used as an excuse for subjecting an individual or group to bullying or harassment or for committing a hate incident.

Appendix: Definitions

'The Equality Act (2010)' is the UK's statutory legislation for protecting people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The School's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy has been informed by the Act and all other applicable legislation.

- **'Equality'** refers to a situation in which people are treated equally and with parity of esteem, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.
- **'Diversity'** refers to the comparative number of people included in something who have a protected characteristic versus those who do not.
- **'Inclusion'** refers to the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised, particularly due to their having one or more protected characteristics.
- **'Protected Characteristics'** are characteristics identified in the Equality Act that may make a person vulnerable to unlawful exclusion or discrimination; these include:
 1. **Age:** This refers to a person belonging to a particular age group, such as children, young people, or older adults
 2. **Disability:** A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
 3. **Gender reassignment:** This protects individuals who are undergoing, have undergone, or are proposing to undergo a process for reassigning their sex.
 4. **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** This characteristic protects individuals who are married or in a civil partnership from discrimination.
 5. **Pregnancy and Maternity:** This protects women against discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity leave, covering the period from the beginning of pregnancy to the end of maternity leave.
 6. **Race:** This includes colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins. It protects individuals from discrimination based on their racial identity.

7. **Religion or Belief:** This protects individuals from discrimination based on their religious beliefs or lack thereof, including various faiths and philosophical beliefs.
8. **Sex:** This characteristic protects individuals from discrimination based on whether they are a man or a woman.
9. **Sexual Orientation:** Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Version History:

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Version	Changes	Date	Approved by:
0.1	Draft	-	-
1.0	First approved version	July 2025	Governing Body