

## **Equality and Diversity at Middlesex University**

### **Equality and Diversity Strategy**

Why do we need a strategy?

The University has a corporate plan that sets out the main aims of the University over a period of the next five years. This sets the direction of travel for the University within the regulatory framework and covers governance, organisation and management. To support this corporate plan there is a need to address the issues of equality and diversity. If these areas are ignored to any great degree it is unlikely that the aims and goals of the University will be fully met. In order to address this linkage between equality and diversity – the people matters – at Middlesex, an equality and diversity strategy has been developed.

What does the strategy aim to achieve?

The equality and diversity strategy has been developed to provide an operational framework including the building blocks for the successful implementation. This is not only to fulfil legislative responsibilities but also to support the creation of a more effective, equitable and supportive environment at Middlesex.

The University has a plethora of policies and procedures concerning its human resources and students. However there is a gap between the paper trail of policies and the actuality of action and reaction across the University. The equality and diversity strategy sets out seven fundamental strands within, and by which Middlesex can operate a more supportive, fair and equitable organisation.

Why do we need a set of core values?

Because they define the way in which we are expected to act both as individuals and in teams to deliver our goals of; excellence in learning and teaching, excellence in research, scholarship and development of professional practice, and a stimulating student experience.

In order to help us achieve our goals, we have defined a set of core values. These core values bind us together as an organisation, and enable us to have a common understanding of how we value and respect people. They are also the starting point to this wider business objective of forward planning. This will enable Middlesex University as an organisation and as individuals to successfully work towards their goals.

## **Background and Context**

### Middlesex University's Vision

Middlesex aims to have:

- a culturally and internationally diverse staff and student body
- substantially larger numbers of international students, postgraduate students, work-based students and part-time students
- much greater diversity in the sources of teaching and research income

To achieve these aims the University must attract and retain a talented, highly skilled and well-motivated workforce. It can only hope to achieve this if it is seen as a centre of excellence not only in its teaching and learning but also in its practices with regard to inclusion, welcoming and realising the potential of the diverse society that we live in. We must aim to maintain and improve our position as a university of choice for staff and students, both in the UK and internationally. We want to do by championing a socially inclusive approach to participation in higher education.

We are already in a positive position but we are working towards becoming an even more diverse organisation across all areas of our activities. Some examples of our diversity are that:

- our student population from minority ethnic origins has consistently been close to or over 50% with an additional large contingent of international students, whilst around one fifth of staff identify themselves as from minority ethnic origins;
- more than half our staff are women about a quarter of our senior managers women and 10% of senior management are of minority ethnic origin;
- close to 5% of our staff have declared that they have a disability.

To achieve our goals we must create an open and fair working, teaching and learning environment. We have a lot of policies that deal with equality and diversity but what is required is for us to embrace positive change in an action orientated way. This approach will help to deliver a really inclusive organisation where all people are supported in the realisation of their maximum potential.

### **The Diversity Business Drivers**

This strategy is aimed at positioning the University as a champion in the field of diversity. In order to achieve this, we need to focus more energy on adding value and understanding how diversity can help towards delivering and meeting key business priorities. In the context of the University diversity is defined as being concerned with recognising our differences and making the most of everyone's potential. Diversity as a concept goes further than equality of opportunity covered by employment legislation but is not a replacement for it. It is not about language or political correctness or distracting from the business needs and it is also more than demographic profiles. Diversity in the work and learning environment is about having a workforce and student body that is motivated by being treated with respect and through recognition of the value of their contribution to the University.

Embracing the concepts of diversity is about making an effort to recognise that people in the workplace are of differing cultural, ethnic, racial and gender backgrounds that have different religions, nationalities, ages and capabilities. The University remains fully committed to the provision of equality of opportunity in all that it does.

The University has made progress in some areas of equality and diversity but we can still strive for greater progress in areas such as age,

There are three business reasons driving our approach on diversity;

- accessing a wider and more diverse talent pool;
- responding to needs of a diverse community; and
- legislation

## **The Strategy**

The equality and diversity strategy will have seven elements;

- Leadership - Commitment from the top
- Building commitment across the University
- Measuring and monitoring progress
- Identifying and removing barriers to progress
- Embedding equality and diversity in all policies
- Continuing to develop more flexible working arrangements
- Development of generic equality and diversity competences

### **Leadership - Commitment from the top**

All members of the Executive and Governors are committed to achieving equality of opportunity and outcome at all levels at the University. They will demonstrate through words and actions that equality and diversity are an integral part of meeting the University's operational priorities.

The University has a high level strategic committee to oversee the direction of the equality and diversity agenda for the University. The Equal Opportunities Committee will specifically;

- Review progress on equality and diversity matters
- Seek advice and receive feedback
- Set annual priorities for action

### **Building commitment across the University**

The Equal Opportunities Committee provide a top level lead for the University's equality and diversity strategy. However the strategy's success depends upon action being undertaken by managers, staff and students. Therefore we must ensure that commitment to delivery of the University's equality and diversity programme is inherent in all that we undertake.

Deans of School and Heads of Service should include equality and diversity objectives in their operational plans and ensure that all staff are aware of them to enable the achievement of the objectives.

## **Measuring and monitoring progress**

The Equality and Diversity Manager will monitor progress by conducting regular data analysis, covering age, disability, gender and ethnicity. We will continue the process of sharing successes and difficulties, tracking and measuring progress and shaping the future direction of the strategy. We will do so by monitoring, evaluating and reporting on our objectives, policies and processes, through for example the Annual Report on Equality and Diversity. Where necessary we will revise and strengthen our reporting and measurement tools in order to undertake impact assessment.

## **Identifying and removing barriers to progress**

If the strategy is to succeed, it is essential to understand better why particular groups fail to achieve equality of outcome and do not make progress in appropriate numbers to middle and more senior positions. Consequently the University must be certain that everything is done to ensure that all unnecessary barriers to delivery of the equality and diversity agenda are removed in order to create fair and equitable work and learning environment.

## **Embedding equality and diversity in all policies**

Equality of opportunity and an inclusive approach to diversity needs to be embedded in all the university's policies, procedures and practices. This will aid the creation of a fair and equitable work and learning environment.

## **Continuing to develop more flexible working arrangements**

All staff must have the opportunity to have a reasonable balance between work and outside life. The University will continue to develop a range of flexible working arrangements which help staff cope with individual, partnership or family and work responsibilities.

## **Development of generic competences to deliver equality and diversity**

In order to make the commitment to equality and diversity a reality we all need to examine our own behaviour and attitudes. Recognising and avoiding unconscious discrimination can be difficult. Generic competences will help to focus on what is required to translate the equality and diversity strategy into action in an operational context.

## **Middlesex University - Core Values**

### **Honesty and integrity**

This goes beyond observance of professional standards: it is about openness and prudent judgement. It is about gaining trust and being straightforward in all of our working relationships. Some examples are given below;

- Give advice we believe in
- Behave ethically and stay true to our standards
- Avoid conflicts of interest
- Agree clear expectations
- Adopt a truthful and straightforward approach, even if the message is difficult
- Speak up if we think something is wrong, without fear of recrimination or victimisation
- Respect confidences
- Consult and communicate in an open and transparent manner
- Seek out, and give, honest and constructive feedback
- Appraise people objectively and treat them fairly

### **Mutual support**

We treat each other with consideration, dignity and respect with a strong ethos of sharing and consultation. We go to great lengths to help each other out. We stand up for each other and do not have a blame culture. Some examples are given below;

- Make time for any colleague who wants to talk through an issue
- Help each other out by freely giving advice and sharing workloads
- Ask for help when we need it
- Share ideas, opportunities, knowledge and resources
- Try to understand each others' points of view
- Accept that people will sometimes get things wrong
- Learn from our mistakes
- Support others when they are in difficult personal circumstances
- Consult and involve others in decisions
- Show consideration for people's needs inside and outside work

## **Strong personal commitment to colleagues and students**

Our student and colleague relationships are more than just learning and work partnerships: we aim to understand people, and build long-standing relationships based on mutual respect and trust. We care about the success of our students and colleagues and are committed to delivering best value. We adopt a professional approach and it is important that our colleagues and students enjoy working with us. Some examples are given below;

- Ensure we are accessible and quick to respond
- Adopt a proactive approach
- Communicate on a regular basis
- Give high quality, constructive and tailored advice
- Think about the needs of our colleagues and students
- Analyse why colleague and student relationships succeed or fail
- Develop and demonstrate expertise
- Seek out, and respond to feedback
- Build relationships at all levels

## **Taking personal responsibility**

We treat each other as equals. We all have a strong sense of responsibility to colleagues and the university, engendering an environment where everyone can operate with the appropriate amount of flexibility and freedom. We appreciate and recognise everyone's strengths. We can be ourselves. Some examples are given below;

- Operate in a flexible way within agreed parameters
- Demonstrate confidence and trust in each other
- Delegate and encourage people to take responsibility as early as possible
- Give others the space to try things out and support without interfering
- Nurture independent thinking and ideas
- Value individuality
- Show initiative and challenge our own comfort zones
- Create and make the most of opportunities
- Adopt a proactive approach to problem solving and improvements
- Lead by example

## **Equality and Diversity – Priorities for 2006-07**

### 1. Specific Equality Legislation

There is a raft of legislation that impacts on the operation of the University and which requires us to undertake certain actions.

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 – compliance with the general and specific duties of the Act

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 – compliance with the general and specific duties of the Act

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 – compliance with the impacts of the regulations at Middlesex

Equality Act 2006 – compliance with the general duty expressed in the Act

Work and Families Act 2006 – compliance with the new provisions of the Act such as maternity and adoption pay, improved communications during maternity leave, grant carers of adults right to make flexible working requests

### 2. Review of Work / Life Policies and Procedures

In line with the compliance work for the Work and Families Act 2006 there is a need to review and assess the efficacy and operation of the University's current work / life balance policies and procedures. This review will investigate the usage of the policies, the knowledge amongst employees of the policies and if there are any adverse equality impacts of the policies to assess where we can improve the policies.

### 3. Dignity and Respect at Work Programme

Develop a programme of action to support the adoption of an approach to behaviours at work that recognise the importance of treating everyone with dignity and respect. This will not only focus on the University workforce but also include treatment of customers, students and our doorstep communities.

### 4. Teaching, Learning and Research

Part of the impact of the duties of equality legislation particularly disability, gender and race, means that actions will be required to ensure that the University complies with those duties. This will include integration of equality impact assessment across teaching, learning and research activities to assess the impact of policy / module / curriculum / research development on particular groups.