

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) is committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across all its work as an employer, tertiary education and research institution, and service provider. We recognise that the promotion of equality and diversity is fundamental to good governance and management practices, and that this principle will support us to our strategic priorities and outcomes.
- 1.2. SRUC works hard to promote inclusive working and learning environments, and to deliver inclusive services which are free from discrimination and where our employees, students, and anyone associated with SRUC (e.g. visitors, contractors, and suppliers) are treated fairly.
- 1.3. SRUC requires all members of the SRUC community to treat each other with respect, dignity and consideration at all times, in keeping with the principles and spirit of this policy and SRUC's [shared values](#).
- 1.4. This policy outlines the main ways SRUC will realise and monitor our ambitions to improve diversity, enable inclusion and promote equality so that our community will realise their full potential regardless of their background.
- 1.5. SRUC promotes awareness of this policy across the institution through appropriate communication channels and through relevant information or training to support staff and students to understand their rights and responsibilities with regards to equality, diversity, and inclusion
- 1.6. SRUC works in partnership with the SRUC Student's Association and Trade Unions to inform and gain feedback about its work on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all members of SRUC's community including:
 - employees, board members, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers, and interns – all referred to as 'employees' for ease of reference in this policy unless otherwise stated.

- Students, including exchange and placement students and those applying to study at SRUC (see Education Manual)
 - Visitors and volunteers, including individuals using SRUC's premises
 - Contractors and suppliers including organisations that may deliver services on SRUC's behalf
 - SRUC's interactions with customers and wider stakeholders.
- 2.2. SRUC does not tolerate harassment, victimisation, or unjustified discrimination, on the grounds of a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics include sex, age, disability, gender reassignment (including gender identity), marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.
- 2.3. SRUC recognises that people from different backgrounds and lived experience bring valuable insights and enhance the way we work, learn, and deliver services. In addition to the protected characteristics, SRUC promotes equality of opportunity for employees, students, and stakeholders regardless of
- socio-economic background
 - Caring responsibilities
 - Being in care or 'looked after' as part of our corporate parenting duties which also includes students who are estranged, refugees, or travellers.
 - Being a veteran
- 2.4. All employees, students, visitors, contractors, suppliers, and others who fall within the scope of this policy are expected to adhere to it, and are responsible for ensuring their own understanding of the policy and for seeking clarification on any aspect of this policy.
- 2.5. This policy is published on our employee intranet and in the student Education Manual. Contractors, suppliers, and other stakeholders will be made aware of this policy through any formal contractual arrangements with SRUC or other means as appropriate. This policy is also available on the SRUC website.

3. Policy statement and legislative context

- 3.1. SRUC is committed to compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the [Equality Act 2010](#), which requires us to pay due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation, and harassment.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.
- 3.2. As a listed public authority in Scotland, SRUC is supported to meet the public sector equality duty through compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (Scotland) (Specific Duties) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent updates).
- 3.3. In respect of the protected characteristics (see paragraph 2.2), SRUC does not tolerate and works to prevent and eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation as defined under the Equality Act 2010. Appendix A provides a summary of the forms of discrimination prohibited under this policy and which are unlawful.
- 3.4. You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass people including current and former employees, job applicants, students, customers, contractors, suppliers, and visitors. This applies:
 - in the workplace or learning environments (whether at home or in the office/ on campus)
 - online or in-person
 - outside the workplace or learning environments (e.g. when dealing with customers, contractors, suppliers, or other work-related contacts)
 - on work or course related trips or events including social events
 - to any work or study related interactions online or on social media.
- 3.5. SRUC's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion may include taking positive action, where required and as provided for within the Equality Act 2010. Positive action can be a proactive and proportionate means of

enabling people to overcome or minimise disadvantage or participate in activity where they are underrepresented on account of a protected characteristic(s).

4. Responsibilities and commitment

- 4.1. Everyone has individual responsibility for their own behaviour and must accept the principle that there is equality of opportunity and fairness for all employees, students, and our wider customers (e.g. visitors, contractors, suppliers and service providers) in all aspects of college life, the working environment, and through the services SRUC provides.
- 4.2. Individuals must ensure they do not support unfair behaviour by ignoring what is happening around them and must not incite or collude with unfair or unlawful discrimination. All employees, students and anyone associated with SRUC have a responsibility to adhere to this policy and apply it in their day to day work.
- 4.3. Any member of the SRUC community found to be responsible for inciting, perpetuating, or colluding with discrimination or harassment may face disciplinary action.
- 4.4. In addition to individual responsibilities, specific responsibilities in relation to this policy are summarised as follows:
 - **Board members** are responsible for promoting equality and the principles of this policy.
 - The **Principal and Chief Executive** has overall responsibility for promoting equality, compliance with our legal duties and ensuring the effective operation of this policy, supported by the representative Vice Principal in their role as Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
 - **Executive Leadership Team** are responsible for compliance with SRUC's statutory equality duties under their remit and embedding a culture that embraces equality and respect in line with this policy.
 - All **committees, management groups and working groups** are responsible for paying due regard to this policy and SRUC's statutory equality duties when making decisions and carrying out their business.

- The **Chief People Officer** is responsible for implementation of this statement with respect to employees and for implementing supporting Human Resource policies and procedures.
- The **Faculty Management Teams** are responsible for implementation of this policy with respect to students and for implementing related policies and procedures. They are also responsible for raising the profile of this policy within their faculties and across their respective campuses and ensure that all staff and students are aware of the commitments within this policy.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead** is responsible for monitoring SRUC's compliance with equality legislation and for providing advice, guidance, and training.

5. Equality impact assessments

- 5.1. SRUC is committed to promoting and monitoring fairness and equality of opportunity by conducting equality impact assessments where required. An equality impact assessment (EqIA) is a systematic, evidence based process used to embed equality into our policies, procedures, practices, and services.
- 5.2. Equality impact assessments will be conducted to ensure the public sector equality duty is embedded in SRUC policies, practices, processes, and services and are the most effective that they can be for students, employees, customers, and the wider communities they affect.
- 5.3. Further information on undertaking an equality impact assessment can be found in SRUC's Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit (internal only).

6. Disability

- 6.1. We encourage you to tell us if you experience barriers at work or during your studies because of a disability or long term health condition so that we can support you as appropriate. SRUC recognises that disability can be permanent or temporary and can exist from birth or be acquired later in life.

- 6.2. Employees can discuss reasonable adjustments with their line manager or Human Resources team. Students can discuss reasonable adjustments with their Year Tutor or Student Support Services Team.
- 6.3. The person or team that you contact may wish to consult with you or gain additional medical advice about possible reasonable adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and will aim to meet your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution.
- 6.4. We will monitor the physical and environmental features of our estate to identify where they might be a barrier to people with disabilities, including non-visible disabilities and for people with mental health conditions, and place someone at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve the accessibility of our estate.

7. Monitoring

- 7.1. SRUC collects, stores and analyses equality data about employees, students, and people who apply to work or study with us.
- 7.2. Information is gathered across the protected characteristics and, where relevant, about other groups as stated in paragraph 2.3. Please see SRUC's Equality Data Monitoring Guidance for more information about the standardised question and answer values and our data collection principles.
- 7.3. Information is gathered directly from the individual and helps SRUC to comply with its regulatory duties and monitor the effectiveness of this policy. The data is used to:
 - Understand the profile of SRUC's workforce and student populations.
 - Explore and take action to address any trends and patterns of potential disadvantage or discrimination that may exist
 - Inform SRUC's people policies, strategic priorities in relation to our workforce and helps SRUC understand any differences in experience by equality group(s)
 - Measure and report progress in meeting SRUC'S equality priorities.

- 7.4. All equality data is held confidentially and securely in line data protection legislation and only used for the purposes set out in this policy or provided to individuals at the point of collection. Please refer to SRUC's [Privacy Notice](#) for further details of how we handle your personal data.
- 7.5. Where SRUC publish equality data to comply with our Scottish specific duties, we do so in a way that ensures individuals cannot be identified.

8. Breaches of this policy

- 8.1. Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and fairly, and may lead to disciplinary proceedings or other appropriate action. Complaints will be treated in confidence.
- 8.2. If any employee considers that this policy has been breached, please contact your line manager or Human Resources in the first instance. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.
- 8.3. If any student considers that this policy has been breached, please contact your Year Tutor or Student Support Services in the first instance. You may also want to speak to the SRUC Student Association.
- 8.4. If any visitor, contractor or other SRUC stakeholder considers that this policy has been breached, please refer to our [Complaints Handling Procedure](#).
- 8.5. There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff who complain about discrimination, bullying or harassment. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith may be treated as misconduct and dealt with under the relevant student or employee discipline policy.

9. Policy review

- 9.1. This policy is reviewed by SRUC in consultation with our recognised trade union and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee no later than every 5 years. An earlier review may be required in response to a change in the law or recognised good practice, or where our equality monitoring indicates the policy is not working and substantive change is required. Any

minor changes that are required can be made by SRUC at any time and will be notified to the trade union, employees, and students.

10. Links to other relevant policies and guidance

10.1. This policy is supported and embedded within all SRUC's policies. In general, employee policies can be found through SRUC's intranet site and student policies can be found in the Education Manual.

10.2. Colleagues in Research and specialist teams or roles may be subject to internal and external guidelines or codes of conduct in addition to this policy. Please speak to your line manager for more information.

10.3. Policies specifically relevant to this policy include but are not limited to those listed below.

10.4. Employees only

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance and Disciplinary policies
- Other Human resources policies

10.5. Students only

- Safeguarding (students)
- Fitness to study/Fitness to practice
- Maternity
- Student Support
- Mitigating Circumstances
- Reasonable Adjustments
- Student Discipline Policy
- Postgraduate Handbook and Code of Practice

10.6. General policies

- Acceptable Use of IDS Facilities
- SRUC Social Media Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing): Code of Practice and Procedure

Appendix A: Forms of discrimination

Please refer to the [Equality Act 2010](#) for more information about forms of discrimination and the relevant protected characteristics.

Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay.

Discrimination by association: occurs when someone is treated less favourably because they associate with someone else who has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by perception: occurs where someone is thought to have a protected characteristic. It applies even if the individual does not have that characteristic. For example, a student is subjected to homophobic comments because of their style of dress or choice of course.

Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.

Harassment: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

Victimisation: treating someone unfavourably because they have taken some form of action relating to the Equality Act e.g. complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.