

SEXUAL ORIENTATION POLICY

MARCH 2006

Revised August 2011

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The University is committed to creating an inclusive community in which every person is treated equally and with dignity and respect. This includes respect for a person's sexual orientation and for any partners they may have. The University, through this policy, will ensure that all staff and prospective staff are not subject to discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation.
- 1.2 It is expected that everyone within the University community will adhere to this policy and behave in ways that are sensitive to and respectful of others and not doing so may result in disciplinary action. It should be recognised that it contravenes the harassment policy to harass another person because of their sexual orientation or because of the perception (accurate or otherwise) of their sexual orientation.
- 1.3 The policy should be read as part of the wider set of policies, including equality and diversity, within the University that includes:
- Equality and Diversity Policy
 - Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - Grievance Procedures for all staff
 - Academic Appeals Procedure
 - Recruitment and Selection Procedure
 - Promotion Review Procedures
- 1.4 The University will take reasonable steps to investigate and take action if any threatening material or communications, whether written, spoken or broadcast, which is intended to stir up hatred (or any other conduct) which otherwise contravenes the aims and objectives of this policy, is apparent anywhere on campus. Individuals found supplying, communicating, broadcasting or acting on such material or communications may be subject to disciplinary action and/or prosecution for the offence of incitement to hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation pursuant to the Public Order Act 1986 (or other public order offences).

2 Definition of Sexual Orientation

- 2.1 The University defines sexual orientation as orientation towards persons of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both sexes. Other common terms in describing sexual orientation are bisexual, gay, heterosexual, lesbian or straight.
- 2.2 It should be recognised that sexual orientation does not imply sexual practices and neither is any sexual practice implied though an individual's sexual orientation.

3 Being “Out”

Everything in this section relates to non-heterosexuals

- 3.1 Some staff may choose to be open about their sexual orientation (“out”) and discuss issues relating to sexual orientation with their line manager, and or peers. It is important not to assume that because an individual has discussed their sexual orientation with one person, that they have discussed it with others or that they wish their private life to be disclosed to others. This also includes confidentiality around the name of a person’s partner. The individual should have control over who is aware of their sexual orientation and who is not.
- 3.2 Staff who are out should not be required to solely take on pastoral care duties of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual students. Similarly, these staff should not be given sole responsibility for dealing with all issues of sexual orientation in the curriculum.
- 3.3 People who express a wish to come out should be afforded support and assistance in doing so and any negative reactions from others should be dealt with appropriately. The Equality and Diversity office will be able to advise in such matters.
- 3.4 Not all people in the University community will wish others to know of their sexual orientation. Every care should be taken not to ‘out’ someone inadvertently. If a situation arises in which a person’s sexual orientation is made known to others as a result of action under any University procedures, this must be kept confidential to the parties involved and not disclosed to any other individual outside of that process.
- 3.5 There is no legal requirement to monitor and record sexual orientation and given the sensitivity involved the University will not seek to hold this information.

4 Recognition of Established Partners/Civil Partnership Act

- 4.1 The Civil Partnership Act came into effect on 5 December 2005, enabling two non-related, unmarried adults of the same sex to register a civil partnership. A civil partnership it is only available to same sex couples and is not the same as marriage, though many of the rights conferred through civil partnership are the same as those conferred by marriage. Lesbian and gay couples who register as civil partners will have formal legal recognition of their relationships, and will have rights and duties to each other and to third parties and the state. Employees who are civil partners are entitled to the same employment and pension benefits that are provided to married employees, for example, flexible working, statutory paternity pay, paternity and adoption leave or time off before or after marriage/registration. To enter into a civil partnership, couples will need

to register their intentions. If there is a breakdown of the relationship there will be a court-based dissolution process, which is similar to divorce.

- 4.2 Staff are entitled to the family leave that is available to those in opposite sex partnerships. This includes the suite of family friendly policies, maternity leave, adoption leave, paternity leave and to apply for flexible working arrangements. Reference should be made to the specific policies for further details. Requests should be dealt with sensitively and where the staff member concerned wishes to keep their personal life confidential they should be able to do so.
- 4.3 It should be noted that a female in a same sex couple is entitled to paternity leave as would be a male in an opposite sex couple.
- 4.4 People are not required to inform others of the relationship between themselves and their named contact in an emergency. All University staff will treat emergency contacts as though they are relatives and afford them the sensitivity that the circumstances demand.
- 4.5 Occasionally staff may be invited to social functions in relation to their employment at the University. Where the University is responsible for invitations, it will ensure that the names of the partners of all established couples are included as appropriate and where known.
- 4.6 Access to facilities that are available to partners of opposite sex couples will be made available to same sex couples.
- 4.7 Advice and guidance is available from the Equality and Diversity Office on all matters relating to sexual orientation.

5 Staff Groups

- 5.1 The University will provide support and facilities to staff and student groups where there is sufficient interest. For staff such support will be through their Faculty/Department Human Resource Manager/Officer.