

Equality and Diversity for Students

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to this online course on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for students. At the end of this course you will know what Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is, as well as why you need to know. The skills you learn here will be valuable throughout your time at Bristol and in your future career.

This course asks you to think about how people are different, how these differences can affect working life for the University's staff and students, and why it's important to be positive about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

What is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

At Bristol we value diversity and the social, academic and societal benefits that it brings to our university. We are committed to creating an inclusive learning community where all students, from all backgrounds have an enriching and stimulating experience. We want our students to be able to express themselves so they can thrive, learn, and grow during their time at university, on placement, and in their future careers.

An appreciation of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) means acknowledging the skills, contribution, and personal attributes of everyone in our society.

What is Equality?

The opportunities, life chances and outcomes for every one of us may well be affected by the way in which other people, or society in general respond to particular 'dimensions' of our identity, for example our ethnicity, age, sex, sexuality, gender identity, religion, or whether or not we are disabled. This is not to say that we are necessarily victims of our identity or of our backgrounds, but that there may be implications that result from them.

Equality is about ensuring everybody has an equal opportunity and is not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics.

What is Diversity?

Diversity is about recognising the value of difference. It means taking into account and appreciating people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experiences. Diversity of thought, belief and background enables us to challenge accepted norms and leads to new ideas and ways of doing things.

Diversity is something that applies to everyone and should be part of everything we do.

What is Inclusion?

Diversity and inclusion are often spoken of together, but they are not the same thing. Inclusion is about creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcome and valued

for who they are as an individual or group. The more inclusive we are, the more individuals are encouraged to contribute and the more we benefit from diversity.

An inclusive community is one in which all people are respected and feel safe from abuse or harassment. It involves providing equality of opportunities, and removing the barriers created by discrimination.

At university, it means a culture where everyone feels like they belong and can fully participate in teaching, learning, and social activities. This enables all students to develop academically, professionally and personally to fulfil their potential.

What does it take?

Really understanding equality, diversity and inclusion means thinking about how our own and others' values and beliefs influence the conclusions that we come to and the theories that we propose or support. To be able to think broadly in this way is an important life skill.

Learning about other people's experiences and ways is interesting and broadens our horizons. During your time at the University you are likely to come across others who work, study or think differently to you as a result of their backgrounds and life experiences. You should see this as a positive and take advantage of the opportunities that this situation presents.

Creating and sustaining an inclusive environment takes active involvement from each of us.

- Know what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is
- Treat people, including fellow students and staff, with dignity and respect
- Be committed to working with people who may be different from you
- Understand the benefits of a diverse student community
- Be ready to learn from others who have a different way of approaching things.
- Communicate with a wide range of people
- Know how to and be committed to challenging prejudiced attitudes and behaviour.

Your future

In a globalised economy, employers are increasingly looking for staff who value diversity; can work with all kinds of people equitably; and who foster a climate of inclusion where diverse thoughts are freely shared and integrated. These are key professional skills at all levels, and especially important if you aspire to leadership in your field. University provides many opportunities to work with individuals who represent a variety of thoughts, races, cultures, age groups, disabilities, and genders. Approaching these opportunities with sensitivity and a commitment to inclusivity helps develop and demonstrate these essential skills for your future career.

Consequences

And finally, a word of warning: if you are not positive about equality and diversity, do not respect others, or put your prejudices into practice, you may affect the opportunities of other staff members, or students and you may even run the risk of disciplinary action.

Assessment - What is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality / Diversity / Inclusion / Prejudice / Stereotype / Discrimination

These are words that you are likely to have come across, and perhaps you feel that you have a good understanding on what they are about. Why not test your knowledge?

Of the 5 questions which follow choose the correct word for each definition or description.

Don't forget that principles of equality, diversity and inclusion do not have such a high profile in all parts of the world, so employees and students from cultures different to your own may see things from an alternative viewpoint.

Question 1

Acknowledging and valuing all the visible and non-visible differences of the people that make up communities or an organisation - practices, activities, understanding and backgrounds.

This is:

- a) Prejudice
- b) Diversity
- c) Discrimination
- d) Equality

The correct answer is **Diversity**.

Question 2

Treating someone worse than someone else for reasons that are not relevant. This is:

- a) Prejudice
- b) Diversity
- c) Discrimination
- d) Equality

The correct answer is **Discrimination**.

Question 3

Feeling less positive towards a particular group of people. This is:

- a) Prejudice
- b) Diversity
- c) Stereotype
- d) Discrimination

The correct answer is **Prejudice**.

Question 4

Fair and respectful treatment, with civil and political rights. This is:

- a) Prejudice
- b) Diversity
- c) Stereotype
- d) Equality

The correct answer is **Equality**.

Question 5

Creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcome and valued for who they are as an individual or group. This is:

- a) Discrimination
- b) Diversity
- c) Equality
- d) Inclusion

The correct answer is **Inclusion**.

Being self-aware

Most people acknowledge that they have stereotypes and prejudices. But it's important to go one step further – to think about why this is the case, to understand where our feelings and views come from, and to make sure that we don't put prejudice into practice to treat other people unfairly or inappropriately.

Also, while sometimes we consciously recognise that we feel less positive towards a particular group of people, studies show that even when we believe we see and treat people as equals, our hidden biases can unconsciously influence the way we behave.

Language and behaviour - what is acceptable and what is unacceptable

At Bristol we want to protect our students and make sure everyone feels safe. In this section we will look at how the language we use and how we behave can create an inclusive community where everyone feels welcome and accepted.

Language

The words we use or hear influence the way we think. Without us necessarily being aware of it, words can give messages about what we as individuals, or society think about the position or status of a particular group, and whether we view people who are different to us with respect.

It's important to be aware of the language you use and the impact it can have. We understand this might already be familiar for some people, but for others this may be the first time you've been asked to think about this. It's ok to ask questions, to let people know when they get things wrong, and help them to get it right. The most important thing is being willing to learn and treat people with respect.

When deciding what to say, it's important to consider:

- **Whether the use of a particular word or phrase is sensitive.** Could it cause offence because of the way it has been used in the past? Is it patronising? Does it reinforce a negative stereotype? We need to be sure that we really understand the implications of using particular words, and if we don't, perhaps it's best to avoid them completely.
- **Whether an offensive word or phrase has been reclaimed by an oppressed group.** If so, this does not mean that it is now ok for anyone to use the word.
- **If it is relevant to refer to someone in a particular way.** If we 'label' someone, is this appropriate? For example, it can often be the case that we refer to someone's ethnic origin or sexuality, or the fact that they are disabled, even when this has nothing to do with the reason that we are talking about them.
- **Whether the words or phrases we use exclude people.** For example, is our language 'gender-specific', so giving the impression that we are ignoring half the population?
- **If the jokes we tell, or the flippant comments that we make run the risk of causing offence or making others feel uncomfortable.** 'I was only joking' can all too easily be an excuse for unfairness or intolerance.
- **Whether, as long as there is no intent to offend, we can use whatever words we like.** Or is that just an excuse for not thinking carefully and for not making sure that we are well-informed?

Of course, it is not easy to predict the impact of our language, and while some members of a particular group will find a word or phrase offensive, others in the same group will have no problem with it. The common sense and sensitive approach where possible is to ask the person to whom the word refers, or if this is not possible, simply avoid using it.

Tolerance and respect

The University of Bristol is a dynamic, culturally diverse community where people hold a range of political, social, scientific and religious views.

Some of these views may be new to you, some may be challenging, controversial or provocative. It is important that we all approach differences with tolerance and respect.

Whilst debate can enable us to explore differences and learn, not all behaviour can be justified in the name of free speech.

All our students and staff have the right to work and study without fear, harassment or violence. Intolerance can lead to 'hate crimes' such as vandalism, threats, verbal abuse, physical assault or offensive graffiti, or activities such as threatening campaigns, violent protest or the circulation of inflammatory literature. These behaviours have no place at the University of Bristol. If these boundaries are crossed, then it could mean someone is breaking the law and they may face disciplinary action.

We all have a responsibility to uphold values of tolerance and respect within our community, and expect you to:

- Respect the right of others to think differently from you
- Be tolerant of different cultures, views and ways of seeing the world
- Take time to understand others and find things that you have in common with them, as well as exploring your differences.
- Help to make everyone feel a part of the positive and exciting environment. People who are insecure and isolated can turn to extremism
- Do not plan to take part in activities that may harm others, either physically or mentally, or their property
- Do not force your views on others, or intimidate or threaten them
- Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.

Assessment – Language and Behaviour

The following 3 scenarios draw together key issues from the sections on harassment and bullying, language and equality and tolerance and respect.

Choose the correct answer from the options provided.

Question 1

Scenario: Three students are chatting in the coffee bar between lectures. They are first years, and it's quite soon after the start of term. They are discussing the other people on the course. The conversation between two of the students goes something like this:

"I feel really sorry for Katie – it must be terrible to be handicapped like that. I don't know how she manages; and imagine everyone staring at you all the time. I think I'd just stay at home."

"I know, I think the disabled are really brave. They have such a lot to deal with. Sometimes it makes me want to cry.."

At this point, the third student suddenly gets really angry and accuses the other two of being 'patronising' and 'offensive'. The other two look completely mystified and then just start to laugh.

What do you think about this situation?

- a) The third student has a point (the other two were stereotyping Katie and their 'sympathy' is misplaced and inappropriate).
- b) There's nothing wrong with what the two students have said (they are being sensitive, considerate and thoughtful).
- c) The third student is behaving ridiculously (there's no point getting angry and being judgemental because the other two didn't mean to offend anyone).

The correct answer is **a**. The third student has a point (the other two were stereotyping Katie and their 'sympathy' is misplaced and inappropriate).

Question 2

Scenario: It's the start of term and in a hall of residence, a student has put a number of religious posters around the hall and notices of prayer meetings. She invites students in her flat to pray with her before meals, and regularly talks at length about her faith. She is not rude, but is very persistent. A couple of weeks later, the posters have been defaced, taken down and stuck on the student's room door.

What do you think about this situation?

- a) The religious student has a right to talk about her beliefs in this way (and the other students should just ignore her, or tell her if they're not interested).
- b) Whoever defaced the posters have behaved unacceptably (however annoying they find the other student, this is not the correct way to sort out the situation).
- c) It's fair enough for the others to deface the posters (the religious student deserves it).

The correct answer is **b**. Whoever defaced the posters have behaved unacceptably (however annoying they find the other student, this is not the correct way to sort out the situation).

Question 3

Scenario: In a social sciences research group one of the white UK research assistants is particularly interested about life in Africa. There is a black African researcher in the group and she continues to direct questions to him over a few weeks; the subjects she is most interested in are HIV/AIDS, poverty, housing conditions, female genital mutilation and urban crime. To start with, her African colleague is happy to answer her questions, but in one meeting, he becomes angry, says that he is offended, and that he will make a complaint about her. His white colleague is baffled by his reaction.

What do you think about this situation?

- a) The white employee's questions and attitude amount to harassment (the African employee understandably finds the subject matter of the questions offensive as it is all based on negative stereotypes about life and people in Africa).
- b) These questions are fine (the white employee has a healthy interest in and is just trying to find out more).
- c) The questioning is insensitive (it unnecessarily puts the African employee in the spotlight when he is in a minority in the group), but it is not worth making such a fuss about it (particularly because his white employee does not mean to be offensive).

The correct answer is **a**. The white employee's questions and attitude amount to harassment (the African employee understandably finds the subject matter of the questions offensive as it is all based on negative stereotypes about life and people in Africa).

Us and Them: The basics

In this section we'll look at how we react to diversity and how we can create an inclusive student community.

Universities are diverse places – they bring together people from all over the world, who may appear, sound, behave and think very differently from one another. This makes studying at the University interesting and exciting, but it can also be personally challenging as it means that you may be faced with situations, ideas and values that you have never encountered before, or simply just with people who look different to you.

You may come across perspectives that are opposed to your own, and it can be hard to deal with these in an open-minded way. You may even find yourself in a minority, when you have been used to being one of the majority group in previous communities. But remember, the people who you see as 'different', may also see you as very different, too, and be equally daunted by the experience!

These are hard situations to handle, but you can make a start at feeling more comfortable and confident with diversity by following these basic tips:

Treat people as individuals – we often base the way we treat others on generalisations, assumptions or stereotypes. This can lead to misunderstandings and misperceptions; so try to be genuinely interested in finding out about other people as individuals.

Understand that 'different from me' does not mean 'less able than me' or 'less important than me' – people in the majority aren't the 'normal' ones – we are all equally 'normal', or equally 'diverse'!

Avoid blaming difficulties or problems on other people's differences – it's not constructive, and it's all too easy to scapegoat. Instead, learn from the varied ways that people see and approach things.

Be respectful of differences – obviously there will be a limit to what you can feel respectful about, and you are not being asked to respect ways, customs or beliefs that harm others or deny them their rights, but think carefully where you set this limit. Clearly, fundamental social characteristics such as ethnicity, skin colour, sex, gender identity, sexuality, nationality, disability status, age or religion should not in themselves generate disrespect.

Build your cultural knowledge – try to learn a bit more about other cultures and social groups to gain background information. However, use this information carefully, and don't let it lead to stereotyping.

Treat other people the way you would wish to be treated – and don't forget that while you are busy stereotyping others, they are also likely to be stereotyping you! Try to see things from an alternative perspective and from within someone else's shoes.

Rights, Responsibilities and Reporting

A commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is fundamental to the University of Bristol's core values. This is reflected in our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Acceptable Behaviour Policy.

Unfortunately, incidents of discrimination and harassment do happen sometimes. In case you witness or are involved in an incident of this nature, this section will also tell you about sources of support and how to report issues at the University.

For more information you can access the links below:

EDI Policy (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/inclusion/governance-policy-and-guidance/>)

Acceptable behaviour policy

(<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/secretary/documents/student-rules-and-regs/university-acceptable-behaviour-policy-statement.pdf>)

Protecting people from discrimination is not just university policy but is also covered by UK law. The Equality Act (2010) means that it is illegal to discriminate against people on the basis of the following 'protected characteristics':

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

What is discrimination, harassment and hate crime?

Discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because of who they are, because of a protected characteristic, or because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.

Harassment is unwanted behaviour which is intimidating, offensive, humiliating or insulting and which is related to the protected characteristics.

A hate crime is when someone commits a crime against you because of your disability, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, religion, or any other perceived difference.

You can read more about harassment, discrimination and hate crime here (<https://reportandsupport.bristol.ac.uk/support/category/discrimination-and-hate-crime>).

Support at Bristol

If you experience harassment or discrimination you do not have to keep it to yourself. There are many ways to get support at Bristol:

Talk to someone

Hopefully you can speak with family or friends for support. You can also talk to a staff member who you feel comfortable speaking to, and who will listen to your concerns.

Support from a Wellbeing Adviser

You can use the online Report & Support tool (<https://reportandsupport.bristol.ac.uk/>) to report something and request support from a Student Wellbeing Adviser. They will make contact with you to offer support and advise you about your options. This might include making a formal complaint to the University about unacceptable behaviour or reporting something to the police. The Adviser can help you decide if taking further action is right for you.

Report it anonymously

You can use the online Report & Support tool (<https://reportandsupport.bristol.ac.uk/>) to tell us about something anonymously. We cannot take action as a result of an anonymous complaint but we will use the information to keep statistical data about incidents.

Seek advice from Bristol SU

The Just Ask Advice Team (<https://www.bristolsu.org.uk/advice-support>) is here to advise students on how to get the best outcome from University policies, processes and procedures. Their service is free, confidential and impartial.

Other wellbeing support

We have a range of free support and services (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/services/>) available to all undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students.

Assessment - Legislation

To find out more about the equality laws, try our quiz. You will be asked 7 questions - decide whether each statement is true or false.

Question 1

Universities and colleges must provide support for disabled students so that they are not at a disadvantage, compared with students who are not disabled.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **True**. Under The Equality Act, universities and colleges must make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled students. These adjustments should aim to create a 'level playing field', and help individual students to make the most of the opportunities on

offer. 'Reasonable adjustments' to assist students with different disabilities might be such things as providing accessible accommodation for a wheelchair user, or making sure that lecture notes, handouts and reading lists are made available in advance for students with dyslexia.

Question 2

If someone claims that they have been discriminated against by another individual, and a court or a tribunal agrees with their claim, it is always the organisation in which the discrimination occurred that has to pay damages, rather than the individual who carried out the discrimination.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **False**. Often the organisation will have to pay damages, as it is responsible for what goes on, but sometimes cases are taken against individuals who discriminate, and they too can be personally liable and have to pay compensation.

Question 3

Under The Equality Act, people can challenge policies that discriminate, as well as discriminatory acts carried out by one person towards another.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **True**. Both direct and indirect discrimination are unlawful. For examples of direct and indirect discrimination, go to 'Learn more' at the end of this quiz.

Question 4

The laws protect students from discrimination in all of the following college or university activities:

Admissions, Assessment and marking, Accommodation, Student services, Leisure or recreational facilities

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **True**. There should be no discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics in any university or college activity.

Question 5

If you treat someone unfairly without meaning to, under the law this does not count as discrimination.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **False**. Discrimination on any of the grounds already discussed is unlawful, even if it is unintentional.

Question 6

The law prohibits discrimination on all of the following grounds: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **True**. This means that no-one must be treated unfairly because of any of these characteristics, either by another person, or because of the way in which a policy works.

Question 7

Telling jokes about gay or lesbian people, or making offensive comments about a gay colleague could be against the law.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **True**. This may well be sexuality harassment, which is against the law. Similar 'jokes' or comments based around other personal characteristics, for example disability, age or religion/belief are also likely to be unlawful. For more on harassment, go to the 'Language' section of this course.

Conclusion and Final Assessment

You are nearing completion of the e-learning module on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We hope that you have found this helpful and interesting.

You should now progress to complete the final assessment. To pass you must answer 8 out of the 10 questions correctly.

If you feel it necessary to undertake any part of the training again before proceeding, please revisit the relevant section. Remember you can access this module as often as you like at a time and place that is convenient to you.

Question 1

In the UK, discrimination on grounds of race, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership and age is unlawful.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **True**. UK discrimination legislation covers these protected characteristics.

Question 2

Which of the following is a definition for discrimination?

- a) Treating someone worse than someone else for reasons that are not relevant.
- b) Fair and respectful treatment, with civil and political rights.
- c) Irrational suspicion, fear or hatred of a particular group of people.

The correct answer is **a**. Discrimination is about unjustifiably treating someone worse than someone else, possibly because of prejudice or stereotyping.

Question 3

Does equality mean treating everyone the same?

- a) Yes
- b) No

The correct answer is **No**. Equality may mean treating people differently, and in a way that is appropriate to their needs, so that they have fair outcomes and equal opportunity.

Question 4

In today's workplace, the equality, diversity and inclusion skills, knowledge and awareness of staff are not important to employers.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **False**. Today's employers are very interested in the attitudes of their staff and what they know about equality and diversity.

Question 5

A severely dyslexic student applies to take a course at the University. The student is automatically refused a place because they do not have the necessary level of literacy to complete the course. This is likely to be unlawful disability discrimination.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **True**. Whilst the University may have concerns about maintaining academic standards, it is likely that the severity of the condition could be compensated by the use of advanced proof reading software, and the provision of such software would be a reasonable adjustment for the University to make. Equally, it is important for the University to consider the disability of each student and the support that they require relative to the learning outcomes of the course in question, and not to make assumptions about disability without knowing full details regarding the individual concerned. Therefore, to automatically refuse the student a place on the course in this way is likely to be discrimination on grounds of disability.

Question 6

It is important to think about and understand our own prejudices and stereotypes so that we don't act on them and treat someone else unfairly or inappropriately.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **True**. It is important to be able to examine our own feelings about other people and other groups, to avoid discriminating against them, and to broaden our perspectives.

Question 7

Bullying and harassment of students by members of staff at the University is unacceptable, but bullying and harassment of students by other students is OK.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **False**. Bullying is always unacceptable and the University has a policy to clarify this, and to tell you what to do if you are the victim of bullying behaviour.

Question 8

Which of the following is definitely an example of harassment?

- a) Posting offensive comments about a lecturer's sexual orientation on a university college message board
- b) Asking an international student about their cultural traditions and language
- c) Inviting another student out for a drink

The correct answer is **a**. This would be harassment because this action is likely to be humiliating for the lecturer, and create an intimidating work environment for him or her.

Question 9

So long as we don't intend to offend people by the language that we use, we need not worry about our choice of words and expressions.

- a) True
- b) False

The correct answer is **False**. We should always think carefully about our choice of words and expressions and think about how other people will be affected by them.

Question 10

Why should we all be positive about and interested in equality, diversity, and inclusion? Is it:

- a) Because we can all contribute to making the world a fairer place
- b) Because in the UK there are laws that say we must not discriminate
- c) Because our society is very diverse and if we have an open mind we can learn from others who are different to us
- d) Because we should recognise how discrimination and unfairness harm individual people and groups, and how this is damaging for society in general
- e) All of the above

The correct answer is **e**. Although some are more relevant than others, all the above points are good reasons why we should be interested in and feel positive about equality and diversity issues.