

Equal opportunities and Diversity Statement and Policy

Re: For lodging students

Introduction

Founded in 1844 as a theological College for the Presbyterian Church of England, Westminster College relocated to Cambridge in 1899. Today, known as a Resource Centre for Learning (RCL) it is serving the United Reformed Church, and works within the theological and organisational frameworks set by the URC's General Assembly. The Governors, staff and students of Westminster College believe that all people are created in God's image and are loved by God¹. We know that both within and beyond the Church relationships go wrong and people are hurt by the attitudes of others and the decisions we make for ourselves.

As part of the United Reformed Church we affirm our commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world. We intend in spirit and in deed to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all spheres of our activity and are committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation and community. We acknowledge that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible. We base the following statement and commitment upon those adopted by the URC's Mission Council in 2006, reported to the URC's General Assembly in 2008² and in compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The Governors of Westminster College approved this commitment in July 2018. This policy is the overarching equality and diversity direction of Westminster College and should be read in conjunction with the United Reformed Church's declaration that it is a multicultural church, its equality policies on employment, church activities, membership, committees and councils and its discrimination policies in relation to age, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

Statement of policy

Westminster College recognises that exclusion and discrimination can occur on many grounds including those currently recognised in law: age; gender; gender reassignment; skin colour; race; ethnic origin; nationality; religion or belief; disability; sexual orientation; child or domestic care arrangements; pregnancy and maternity arrangements; marital or civil partnership status. Discrimination can be direct - where a person is treated less favorably for a reason unconnected with their ability. Discrimination can be indirect - when a condition, rule, policy or practice applies to everyone but disadvantages a particular group of people. Westminster College, with the whole United Reformed Church, seeks to eradicate less favourable treatment in these areas by endeavouring to:

- promote respect for other people and treat everyone fairly.
- encourage the use of inclusive language and images in our teaching, conversations, worship, literature and publicity.
- challenge any discriminatory attitudes and actions of members of our college community and take steps to bring them to an end.
- address the inequalities of opportunity faced by people in under-represented groups by identifying and removing barriers to participation in all aspects of college life.
- challenge all forms of harassment, bullying or victimization within the college and beyond, taking steps to bring these to an end. (Harassment consists of words or actions which are unwelcome,

¹ Genesis 1:26-31

² For the agreed and related URC texts see: <https://www.urc.org.uk/equal-opportunities.html>

unwanted and offensive to the person receiving them and which create an atmosphere of intimidation, hostility or humiliation for that person. Such behaviour can include embarrassing or offensive jokes, unwelcome physical contact or sexual advances, the expression of racist or homophobic views, lewd comments, etc.).

We will ensure that this statement and related policies are known by the college community and that all students, staff and volunteers at Westminster understand their responsibilities for abiding by this statement and implementing related policies. To this end, we will regularly offer education and training in the principles and practices identified in this statement of equality and diversity. Should there be any concerns about equality and diversity, these can be raised through the PA to the Principal or Bursar or directly with the Principal or Bursar in the first instance.

Responsibilities

The Governors have overall responsibility for ensuring that the College meets its obligations under employment legislation and that the principles of equality of opportunity are given due regard in its strategic planning.

Responsibility for the implementation and review of the policy as it relates to different sections of the College community will be allocated as follows:

- The Principal and Bursar (for non-academic staff and Lodging students)
- The Principal (for members of the Tutorial and Senatus staff)
- The Principal, Director of Studies and Board of Studies (for current students)
- The Principal, Director of Studies and Board of Studies (for candidates for admission to the College)
- The Principal and Director of Studies and Board of Studies (for candidates for Visiting Research Scholars)

All members and members of staff of the College who have managerial responsibilities have a duty to put the Equal Opportunities Policy and its procedures into practice and to follow appropriate procedures if breaches of the policy occur. They should ensure that all staff know about their responsibilities and receive guidance and training as appropriate. All members and members of staff of the College have responsibilities to respect the Equal Opportunities Policy and to keep up to date with the requirements of the law and to take up training opportunities.

The policy principles

The College is committed to being an equal opportunity organisation. It acknowledges that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible through the sharing of the gospel. The College seeks to eradicate less favourable treatment in these areas.

Exclusion and discrimination can occur on many characteristics including those recognised and protected by The Equality Act 2010:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- ethnicity;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

It is important to note that all employees, students or tutors will also be protected from discrimination if:

- they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, e.g. a family member or friend, or
- they have complained about discrimination or supported someone else's claim.

The definition of terms used in the document

'Protected characteristics'

A **characteristic** or trait of a person which may not be used as a basis for decision making in the workplace and, if used, might constitute unlawful discrimination.

'Taking positive action'

The term refers to a number of methods designed to counteract the effects of past discrimination and to help abolish stereotyping. Action can be taken to encourage people from particular groups to take advantage of opportunities for work and training. This can be done when underrepresentation of particular groups has been identified in the previous year. Under this broad meaning positive action may include initiatives such as the introduction of non-discriminatory selection procedures, training programmes or policies aimed at preventing sexual harassment.

How the policy will be applied

The College as a Christian organisation and Resource Centre for Learning for the URC will seek to:

- Build inclusive communities where all will be treated with dignity and respect and have equality of opportunity to contribute their gifts to the common life.
- Identify and remove barriers to participation in employment, training, promotion, leadership and representation on church committees and in the attitudes and actions of every congregation.
- Take positive action to counter attitudes and practices contrary to this statement of intent.
- Define within the law when being of a particular religion or belief is a requirement for any post within the church.
- Develop detailed policies to give effect to these requirements.
- Monitor and report on progress in fulfilling these requirements.
- All teaching colleagues, support colleagues and students of the College must have regard for the principles of this policy in all aspects of their work for the College.
- Take every possible step to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly and that decisions on recruitment, selection of students, training, promotion and career management, participation at events etc are based solely on objective, non-discriminatory and impartial criteria.
- Activities and events organised at or by the College must be fully inclusive.
- So far as is possible, the College will ensure that any person or organisation organising an event or activity on College premises and all persons visiting the College, has regard for the principles of this policy.

The College is also committed as an employer to:

- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued;
- every employee, worker or self-employed contractor is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated;
- providing training, development and progression opportunities to all staff;

- understanding equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense;
- reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

And finally as a Service provider the College is committed to:

- providing services to which all customers (**including lodging students**) are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, ethnicity religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities or social class;
- making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our service users and customers by assessing and meeting the diverse needs of our clients;
- full support of this policy by senior management and ensuring agreement has been reached with employee representatives;
- monitoring and reviewing this policy biennially;
- having clear procedures that enable our customers, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated;
- treating breaches of our equality and diversity policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Allocation of rooms

The rooms for Westminster's students and sabbaticals are allocated by the Tutorial Manager with the assistance of the Office Manager in relation to the occupants own individual requirements, dates and availability.

For the academic year 21-22, the Domestic Bursary team at Lucy Cavendish College will allocate the rooms for their own students let by Westminster College to this effect. Although Westminster College do not hold responsibility for the allocation of the rooms, the College remains responsible for the services, facilities, building upkeep and maintenance on its own premises.

Complaints / Breach

Any member of staff or job applicant who believes that they may have been discriminated against, contrary to the terms of this policy, is encouraged to raise the matter in accordance with the College's Grievance Procedure or in the case of a job applicant by writing to the Bursar. Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the College's [Disciplinary Procedures. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and may result in dismissal without notice.

The Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures are set out in the Staff Handbook.

Enforcement

All employees, tutors and students of the College must play their part in the management, implementation and enforcement of this policy:

- The College will take positive action to counter attitudes and practices contrary to the principles of this policy.
- Any breach of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offence and dealt with in accordance with the College's Disciplinary Policy.
- Any allegation of breach of this policy will be considered a grievance and dealt with in accordance with the College's Grievance Policy.
- If any members of the community or anyone otherwise connected with the College has any concern about the implementation of this policy they should inform their line manager, Principal, the Bursar, or any Governors who will be responsible for initiating an appropriate investigation and responding to the concern.

- The College will prevent discrimination against all the members of the community regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults).

Responsibility for administering and updating the policy

The Bursar is responsible for updating this policy in consultation with the Principal and Management Committee (including two Governors), and seeking advice from United Reformed Church Human Resources Department as necessary.

When it was last revised, when it will next be revised.

July 2021

July 2022

The date from which it applies

September 2021 (subject to approval by the Management Committee)

Statutory regulations and good practice guidance

☞ Equality Act 2010