**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**

**Initial Teacher Education**
**Reflective - Responsive - Research-driven**

# Equality and Diversity Policy: 2024/25

## Introduction

The School of Education and Social Work (ESW) subscribes to promoting equality and diversity and inclusion as part of the University of Sussex's strategy for [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)](). Sussex ITE is committed to providing an inclusive environment for all, including student teachers and the pupils they teach in our local partnership of schools, colleges, and early years settings. The context of delivering a professional training course with pupils in partner schools necessitates an additional focus on EDI for student teachers studying on our ITE courses. By challenging discrimination and prejudice and by educating pupils about our rich cultural heritage, we have a fundamental role to play in reducing inequalities across a range of educational settings across the South East.

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## 1. Initial Teacher Education Curriculum

At Sussex we are committed to developing teachers who understand and respect diversity and who promote inclusive practice in their classrooms. As a key area of our ITE Curriculum Intent, the theme of Inclusion and Diversity permeates all ITE undergraduate and postgraduate training programmes. We expect our student teachers to have a commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils through their phase/subject curricula with a focus on identifying barriers to learning, adapting teaching to meet the needs of all pupils, considering representation through the school curriculum, and working closely with expert colleagues for guidance and support from the university and in school. As such, student teachers are expected to develop an awareness of the features associated with pupils' social backgrounds and cultural and linguistic heritage, their sexuality and gender and their physical, emotional, and intellectual abilities in accordance with the Equalities Act, 2010. Student teachers are taught appropriate processes and protocols to address discriminatory language encountered in the classroom or around school. Student teachers know how to raise concerns with an appropriate expert colleague and have the appropriate tools to challenge discriminatory behaviours in line with school policy.

## 2. Initial Teacher Education: Student teachers and Equalities

We focus on inclusive practices in the selection and recruitment of Student teachers and in the ongoing work and support we provide to Student teachers during their training programmes. EDI training is compulsory for all ITE tutors every two years; staff evaluate our practice each year to ensure we are operating within current guidelines.
We require a commitment from partnership schools to incorporate university policies on equal opportunities into their own school policies and their assistance in the delivery of a course whose features include equality of opportunity in the following areas:

### Selection and Recruitment

Selection and interviews take account of student teachers' specific needs during training to ensure equality of access and opportunity as per the Equality Act (2010) and the SEND Act (2001). Our selection materials, such as our Applying web pages, state that "We welcome applications from potential student teachers with a wide range of backgrounds, race, country of origin, disabilities, gender, sexuality and age.''

We consider making anticipatory adjustments to positively promote equality of access for disabled applicants, including access to benefits, facilities and services and liaise closely with our Student Centre to facilitate this. Similarly, interview arrangements also consider any special arrangements that might be made for potential applicants. We also offer interviews online or in person at the request of the applicant.

Where there is a clear need that the student teacher has not met DfE threshold requirements in GCSE English and mathematics, equivalency tests are offered to individuals in these circumstances.

### In course support and guidance:

- All student teachers are invited to complete a declaration to identify if they require additional support or arrangements through our Suitability Declaration pack.
- Heales' occupational health check identifies any diagnoses that we need to be aware of regarding the student teacher's physical and mental health to make reasonable adjustments.
- Early analysis of needs during induction period for student teacher teachers with disabilities and additional learning needs. Student teachers complete a pen portrait during induction which is shared with university tutors and school-based colleagues including reasonable adjustment plans.

- Student teachers are informed about the Student Centre at the start of their programme and its role in supporting students with a range of needs. Student teachers are directed to the Student Centre at any point in their training programme should they require further guidance and support.
- Reasonable adjustments are also made during the training programme through course variation, temporary withdrawal, and one-to-one tutor/mentor  support.
- We have developed the part time PGCE/School Choice programme (since September 2018) in response to the needs of our student teachers, particularly parents and carers. This is a flexible and inclusive programme where entry and award requirements are the same as for the full-time PGCE Course. Student teachers on this programme follow the same structure of university sessions and school placements as full-time student teachers but over a two-year period.
- The part-time course is sometimes used for full-time student teachers who are finding the demands of the course too much whilst managing other responsibilities at home. This allows student teachers to continue their training without pausing through temporary withdrawal until the following academic year.
- Student teachers with disabilities are supported through DSA funding, for instance funding to access technologies to support the student teacher's work in school placement and at the University.
- For international students and students who are returning to university study after a significant period, we provide training on the English education system to enable a smoother transition into the school environment, voice and self- presentation skills, study and language skills, on-going support, and guidance from personal tutors in these areas throughout the course.
- All tutors support ethnic minority student teachers in university and on school placements to monitor the implementation of equalities. Ethnic minority student teachers are urged to contact their tutor if they have any concerns. ESW also has EM ambassadors who can offer guidance and support: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/esw/internal/forstaff/eandd/race-equality
- Our Canvas sites are kept up to date each week and checks are made for usability and accessibility of the provider-led training.

- Modules consider all needs when preparing teaching sessions so that tutors are modelling inclusive pedagogies – for instance, using standard PowerPoint templates, use of ALT text, fonts, backgrounds/contrasts.
- Pre-reading requirements for each course draw on a range of different formats and are accessible to student teachers.

**School placements:**

School placements should take into account the specific individual needs of student teachers so that schools provide the support necessary to enable student teachers to reach the professional standard of which they are capable, e.g.

- By supporting physical access.
- By raising racial and cultural awareness among Mentors.
- By supporting minority ethnic student teachers in areas which may prove difficult – e.g., cultural adjustments to managing classrooms, student-centered pedagogies, the principles of inclusion and adaptive teaching, language, and accent development, etc.
- By making appropriate adjustments where needed to enable student teachers to reach their potential, for instance considering reasonable adjustments for student teachers with specific SEND – e.g., lesson plans (24-48 hours), teaching timetable, approaches to Mentor feedback and note taking, flexibility in mentoring, support plans with adjustments highlighted.
- By highlighting accessibility issues for student teachers with SEND on our placement lists – e.g., split site schools.
- Our second placement model ensures that wherever possible we place student teachers in a contrasting second placement with different demographics, needs and attainment.

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**3.  Complaints and reporting incidents:**

We log any issues of bullying and harassment that are reported to us by student teachers about another colleague or another student teacher whilst on school placement and provider-led training. These are dealt with on a case-by-case basis with the Professional Tutor in the school (if a school-based incident) and are logged on our Disclosure Tracker which is only available to the Head of Initial Teacher Education and the Senior Course Coordinator. This may also lead to a Termination of Placement and Suitability for Professional Practice Procedures for any Student teacher involved in such an incident.

The University Students Complaints Procedure is also available to any student teacher who wants to report an incident arising directly or indirectly from an equal opportunities issue that takes place in school or at the university.

The SCTER Steering Committee reviews Equal Opportunities issues as a standing item on each agenda. Every two years the Head of Initial Teacher Education reviews the Equality and Diversity policy and reports to the Sussex Consortium Steering Committee.

4.  **Further references**:

For information and guidance about recent legislation on discrimination on protected characteristic see:

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001)

Education Health Standards (England) Regulations (2003)

Equality Act Guidance (2010)

Public Sector Equality Duty (2011)

Higher Education Research Act 2017

ACAS Discrimination on Religion or Belief in the Workplace (2018)

ACAS Age Discrimination in the Workplace (2019)

ACAS Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (2021)

ACAS and Employment Equality Legislation (2024)

Disability Rights UK, education and skills guidance for people with disabilities

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[Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) in Higher Education (2024)](#)

[National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers 2024](#)

[National Education Union 2024](#)

[Ofsted ITE Inspection Framework (2024)](#)