

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 introduces a new cross-cutting equality legislative framework covering employment, facilities, goods and services and education. It harmonises, simplifies and strengthens nine separate pieces of previous legislation such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to deliver a simple, modern and accessible law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a more equal and fair society.

The Act covers the same groups that were previously protected by equality legislation, i.e.

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

These are now called “protected characteristics”. It also extends some protections to characteristics that were not previously covered and strengthens particular aspects of equality law, including extending the definition of direct discrimination.

What actions is the Institute taking to comply with the new Act?

As a public organisation our obligations remain largely the same. However, we will update our policies and procedures to comply with the new provisions, including:

- Ensuring the key changes are reflected in our policies and procedures.
- Assessing which training sessions and materials need to be reviewed and updated in line with the key changes, such as Recruitment and Selection;
- Revising the University’s statement of commitment to tackle all forms of discrimination to include all protected characteristics and prohibited conduct;
- Producing a plan for identifying and meeting the information needs of managers, staff and students, trade unions and students’ unions in line with the key changes and

- Revising relevant university documentation (hard copy or web-based) to ensure that it covers the changes in the legislation.

In response to the General Duty, which comes into force in April 2011, the Equality Manager is:

- Developing an Equality and Diversity Strategy and reviewing the Equal Opportunities Policy;
- Undertaking consultation with interest groups to shape equality objectives and develop an action plan to accompany the Equality and Diversity Strategy;
- Reviewing the programme of equality impact assessments and
- Establishing templates for the publishing of equality data relating to employment and students.

For more information about the Equality Act 2010 please contact the Equalities Manager k.ewdards@ioe.ac.uk