**Union Support Service Equal Opportunities Policy**

This policy is to be read in line with the Constitution of the Union Support Service (USS) and its other appendices, and the overarching Constitution of City Students’ Union and any policies thereunder.

**Policy Statement**

The USS recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or inequality of opportunity for reasons which are unfair. These include (but are not restricted to): race, religion, creed, colour, national and/or ethnic origin, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability (including mental illness), HIV status, marital status, responsibility for dependants, geographical area, social class, income level or criminal record.

The USS is committed to an Equal Opportunities Policy which respects the rights, identity and value of each individual. The USS is positively committed to oppose all discrimination, whether direct or indirect.

**The USS will:**

* Challenge discrimination and lack of opportunity in its own Policy and practice, and will encourage all connected institutions and individuals to do the same.
* Aim to create a culture that respects and values the differences of individuals and recognises that diversity is an asset to its work and the students it serves.
* Ensure all employees, volunteers and students are aware of this Policy and are encouraged to support its objectives.

**Expectations**

We expect both our staff and our service users to adhere to this Policy at all times, whether during an appointment (either in person or over the telephone), via email, in a meeting, in a hearing or whilst acting in a capacity connected to the USS.

**Identifying students’ needs**

The USS is committed to meeting the diverse needs of students who require advice and support. We will take steps to identify the needs of students and develop policies and procedures setting out how we meet students’ needs and to ensure the services we provide are accessible to all. For example, we will take into account the needs of students with disabilities and students who are unable to communicate effectively in English.

**Monitoring**

The USS will monitor and record equal opportunities information about staff and students on the basis of age, gender, ethnic origin, disability and fee status.

We will store this data as confidential personal information and restrict access to it. The information will be used exclusively for equal opportunities monitoring and to ensure the USS is serving students as best it can and is accessible to all. The information will have no bearing on opportunities or benefits.

**Recruitment**

The USS recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to ensure that:

* Recruitment occurs from the widest pool of candidates practicable.
* Employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit.
* Where appropriate, positive action measures are taken to attract applications from all levels of society and especially from those groups which are underrepresented in the workforce.
* Selection criteria and processes do not unlawfully discriminate on any of the grounds suggested in the Policy Statement above, other than in those instances where the USS is exercising permitted positive action or a permitted exception.
* Wherever appropriate and necessary, lawful exemptions will be used to recruit suitable staff to meet the needs of special particular groups.

**Training, Development and Supervision**

All involved with the USS and acting on behalf of it should abide by this Policy. The Manager of the USS (at all times the Student Advocacy and Policy Coordinator) has a duty to ensure all staff (whether paid or volunteers) are made aware of the Policy and adhere to it.

All staff will receive training to ensure they are aware of their rights and responsibilities under this Policy and support to help them understand and implement it. City, University of London organises Equality and Diversity training which takes place regularly. All staff have the option of attending one of these sessions to further their knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity issues.

**Implementing and Following the Policy**

Anyone acting on behalf of the USS will endeavour to become an example of equal opportunities by adhering to all responsibilities as outlined in this Policy.

The implementation and effectiveness of this Policy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.

**Unacceptable Behaviour**

Discrimination, bullying, harassment or exclusion are unacceptable and any behaviour of this kind will not be tolerated.

Anyone aware of an incident of unacceptable behaviour has a duty to report it to City Students’ Union. Any such incidents will be treated seriously and dealt with fairly.

Any person in breach of this Policy will be dealt with under the City, University of London Disciplinary Regulations.

The USS will treat seriously all complaints of unacceptable behaviour made by anyone acting on behalf of the USS and will take action where appropriate. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the USS Complaints Procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

**Changes to the Policy**

Any changes to this policy may be made by the Student Advocacy and Policy Coordinator, the City Students’ Union Chief Executive Officer or the Board of Trustees, and must be approved by the latter group.