

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
1	Approved	Joanne Mulvihill-Allen	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2023

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Updated: May 2022

1) Purpose

- 1.1 The Open College of the Arts (OCA) is committed to providing parity of opportunity for all students wishing to study with us, and staff wishing to work with us. We aim to create and provide a positive and open learning, working and tutoring environment that fosters a sense of belonging, respect, and collaboration at all levels of the organisation. As an institution we value and are dedicated to Diversity, Equality & Inclusion (EDI) within all aspects of learning and teaching.

2) Values

- 2.1 OCA's strategic vision is "to be at the forefront of student-led creative arts education through open, enhanced, & supported distance learning, for an evolving society". OCA is a non-profit educational charity, whose purpose is to widen participation in arts education through open flexible distance and online learning.
- 2.2 OCA's Open Learning Attributes translates our vision and values by outlining the underlying principles that inform approaches to learning, teaching, assessment, learning design, and wider academic related approaches. These are:
- Openness - being accessible, inclusive, adaptable, and flexible
 - Engaging - creating active, enjoyable and meaningful educational experiences
 - Empowering - widening access to arts education, building trust, sharing experiences, and being student-led
 - Social - building learning communities, developing networks, and sharing our experiences
 - Sustainable - building resilience, and integrating environmentally sound and sustainable creative practice
 - Evolving - being relevant and responsive, and creating a positive social impact

3) Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all OCA students, tutors, and staff.

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
1	Approved	Joanne Mulvihill-Allen	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2023

- 3.2** As an organisation, OCA values diversity in our student, staff, and tutor body and will work to ensure that each individual, whatever their background, can achieve their full potential and have a fulfilling experience of higher education. We will build trust within the institution and course materials both for tutors and students to be their authentic selves.
- 3.3** All staff and students at OCA are responsible for enhancing and championing Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. Annually OCA will publish an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan which outlines specific targets and objectives for enhancing EDI in operational & academic practice at OCA. They will do this in collaboration with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Group (EDIG) which is made up of student and staff membership.
- 3.4** We will reflect and actively engage with decolonisation and liberation agendas as part of our wider responsibility to dismantle privilege, power, and exclusion. We want to raise awareness of and challenge the complex and varied legacies of racism, imperialism and colonialism within all spheres of OCA and apply cultural sensitivity to all materials, policies and procedures.
- 3.5** There is zero tolerance for unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation at the OCA.

4) Changes

4.1 Since the last version of the policy, the following changes have been made:

- Our previous policy lacked reference to inclusion so this has been rectified throughout.
- We have included a more detailed description of the [Equality Act](#) and our obligations within it.
- We have listed the protected characteristics.
- We have developed institutional aims and objectives including:
 - Training needs
 - Reasonable adjustments
 - Access audits
 - Equality impact assessment
 - Reporting breaches and procedure for feedback

5) Policies superseded by this document

n/a

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
1	Approved	Joanne Mulvihill-Allen	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2023

6) Related policies and legislation

6.1 This policy references the [Equality Act 2010](#), which requires public sector bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between people who do and do not share a protected characteristic
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share a protected characteristic.

The duty to comply with the [Act](#) is referred to as the ‘public sector equality duty’ (PSED).

6.2 What are the protected characteristics?

6.2.1 There are nine ‘protected characteristics’. These are:

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

*The Open College of the Arts policies, practices and procedures specifically extend to all gender identities including trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people. Please see our [Gender Identity Policy](#).

6.2.2 We also promote equality between different socioeconomic groups, as well as other groups underrepresented in higher education.

6.2.3 The [Act](#) states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

6.2.4 The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) monitors higher education providers. They can enforce the public sector equality duty through [judicial](#)

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
1	Approved	Joanne Mulvihill-Allen	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2023

[review](#).

6.3 Other relevant legislation:

- [Protection from Harassment Act \(1997\)](#)
- [Data Protection Act \(2018\)](#)
- [Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#)

7) Policy / procedure

7.1 Introduction

This policy was written with reference to the [Equality Act 2010](#), through a review of best practice within the HE sector and using resources from [Advance HE](#), [the Equality & Human Rights Commission](#) and [the Office for Students \(OfS\)](#). Information was also drawn from training provided by [Diversity & Ability](#), [PILAA](#) and [Curious Arts](#) for the OCA. Below is a list of important terminology and following are our aims and objectives for this policy.

7.2 Important terminology

7.2.1 Antisemitism/Anti-Jewish racism

The Open College of the Arts adopts the full International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition on antisemitism in line with the UK government and recommendations from the United Nations (UN).

The definition states: 'antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities'.

Read the full definition <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

7.2.2 BAME

Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) is a term that has been widely used by government departments, public bodies, the media and others when referring to ethnic minority groups. However, it emphasises certain ethnic minority groups and excludes others. The terms can also mask disparities between different ethnic groups and create misleading interpretations of data.

<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity>

At OCA we will refrain where possible from using this term - we may need to refer to

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
1	Approved	Joanne Mulvihill-Allen	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2023

it in statistical collection requirements. We will instead endeavour to be clearer and more respectful in our use of language relating to race and ethnicity. We are aware language is constantly evolving and that terminology can be a personal choice, the language that one person identifies with and uses to describe themselves may differ from somebody else. We must remain respectful of individual preferences and not make assumptions about how a person chooses to self-identify and seek to ask when we can.

7.2.3 Guide to Terminology

[Inc Arts](#) have created a guide to terminology, for use by everyone who wants to be an effective ally and wants to avoid causing further harm through the use of casual and inaccurate language. You can view it here

<https://www.governmentevents.co.uk/bameover-a-statement-for-the-uk/>

7.2.3.1 Diversity

Diversity means a spectrum of differences in ability, age, culture, gender, race, religion, and sexuality, for example. Diversity is a celebration of a rich balance of differences.

7.2.3.2 Equality

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.

It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability.

Equality recognises that historically certain groups of people with protected characteristics such as race, disability, sex and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination.

7.2.3.3 Equity

Equity is often referred to as “levelling the playing field”. Equity ensures everyone has individualised support and personalised resources to reach their potential and access opportunities. It anticipates and recognises differences and differing needs.

7.2.3.4 Ethnicity

At the OCA we adopt the [Advance HE](#) definition of ethnicity and it is important to remember that everyone has an ethnicity and ‘white British’ is an ethnic group. Ethnicity refers to a group of people who have a shared history, a cultural tradition, a common geographical origin and a common language.

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
1	Approved	Joanne Mulvihill-Allen	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2023

Read the full Advance HE definition here <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/using-data-and-evidence/use-of-language-race-ethnicity>

7.2.3.5 Global Majority

The term Global Majority was coined by Rosemary Campbell-Stephens. She says “Global Majority is a collective term that first and foremost speaks to and encourages those so-called to think of themselves as belonging to the global majority. It refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'. Globally, these groups currently represent approximately eighty per cent (80%) of the world's population making them the global majority now, and with current growth rates, notwithstanding Covid-19 and its emerging variants, the global majority is set to remain so for the foreseeable future. Understanding that singular truth may shift the dial, it certainly should permanently disrupt and relocate the conversation.” Find out more here <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/-/media/files/schools/school-of-education/final-leeds-beckett-1102-global-majority.pdf>

7.2.3.6 Inclusion

Inclusion is more than just having lots of differences represented; it is about making sure that everyone feels comfortable and confident, valued and respected, heard and understood.

Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education refers to the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others.

https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/hea/private/inclusive_teaching_and_learning_in_he_synthesis_200410_0_1568037026.pdf

7.2.3.7 Intersectionality

The term intersectionality was first used by black feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality recognises that people's identities and social positions are shaped by multiple factors. Among others, a person's age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation and socioeconomic background contribute towards their unique experiences and perspectives.

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
1	Approved	Joanne Mulvihill-Allen	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2023

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/intersectional-approaches-equality-research-and-data>

7.2.3.8 Positive Action

[The Equality Act](#) contains provisions which enable education providers to take proportionate action to achieve fuller and more effective equality outcomes for members of groups that share a protected characteristic that are socially or economically disadvantaged or excluded, or who otherwise face the consequences of past or present discrimination or disadvantage, even though these actions involve discrimination against members of other groups which might otherwise be unlawful. These are known as the 'positive action' provisions.

7.2.3.9 Race

The OCA adopts the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) definition of race discrimination as its definition of racism. The definition states 'race can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as your current nationality. Race also covers ethnic and racial groups. This means a group of people who all share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity or race. A racial group can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups, for example black Britons, British Asians, British Sikhs, British Jews, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers'.

At the Open College of the Arts, we recognise that 'race' is a social construct and the problematic nature of the term 'race'. We only use this term for consistency with other public bodies and in line with [Advance HE](#).
<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/using-data-and-evidence/use-of-language-race-ethnicity>

7.2.3.10 Reasonable adjustment duty

The reasonable adjustment duty requires providers to take positive steps to ensure that disabled students can fully participate in the education and other benefits, facilities and services provided for students.

8) Aims and objectives:

The Open College of the Arts will:

- 1) Embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across all areas of work, and foster a culture which regularly and routinely considers and discusses issues of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
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- 2) Provide training opportunities for staff and students to engage with EDI and social justice agendas including allyship and bystander intervention training.
- 3) Introduce mandatory training for staff at induction points and refresher training every two years.
- 4) Ensure Unconscious Bias training is refreshed at pre-assessment briefings.
- 5) Champion EDI within leadership teams and ensure it forms a part of PDR objectives.
- 6) Work in partnership with our students at all levels and from all backgrounds, continue conversations and engage with significant cultural challenges and change.
- 7) Work with our Student Association to provide appropriate opportunities and spaces for underrepresented student and staff groups.
- 8) Ensure policy and other documents, information, websites, web forums, and social media operated by the OCA will be made accessible for all, conforming to appropriate standards and via various media as per our accessibility policy.
- 9) Create opportunities and provide a way into academia for those who may be marginalised by systems & institutional biases and who are under-represented within OCA.
- 10) Create a dynamic and intuitive EDI hub which will be managed by the EDIG.
- 11) Develop and monitor a safe space reporting tool which will be managed by Learner Support.
- 12) Fulfil our anticipatory reasonable adjustment duty by anticipating any barriers to access and ensure that disabled students can fully participate in their education and enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services which we provide for students.
- 13) Create and implement Equality Impact Assessments for operational and academic changes and developments. These will form part of decision making processes putting EDI at the very heart of our strategies, policies, practices.
- 14) Embed EDI course checklists into our Learning Design Framework.

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
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- 15) Take an intersectional approach to EDI and ensure everyone at the OCA has an understanding of the term and its implications.
- 16) Undertake positive action based on qualitative evidence such as consultations or focus group work with students and staff, equality impact assessments, surveys showing poor experience of an area of provision related to a protected characteristic, complaints and discrimination claims or evidence of similar problems gathered by other education providers.
- 17) Will actively try to reduce gaps in access, retention and attainment for students from all backgrounds and identities and across all disciplines through our access and participation plan and EDI action plan.
- 18) Designate a budget specifically for EDI initiatives with academic and operational departments.
- 19) Improve systems to monitor & report data related to the nine protected groups and increase understanding of how students with more than one characteristic may be further disadvantaged.
- 20) Ensure we use a wider range of options in terminology for example around ethnicity, disability and gender when collecting personal information but understand disclosure is a choice.
- 21) Review communications under an EDI lens for example enrolment and withdrawal forms, surveys etc and improve the feedback loop.
- 22) Regularly conduct access audits across our platforms, policies and procedures.
- 23) Gain a better understanding of our staff profile and review recruitment processes to promote a more diverse workforce and better reflect the diversity of the student population.
- 24) Ensure our workplace is accessible for all staff members.
- 25) We will work towards gaining charter marks and relevant awards.

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
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9) **Implementing the policy**

9.1 The policy will be reviewed annually by the EDI Group consisting of student and staff representation who will consult with those with lived experience where appropriate and in a respectful manner. The policy will have overall approval by the Curriculum and Quality Committee (CQC) who will ensure relevance with current statutory requirements, and best practice in the field of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

9.2 As part of the review process of this policy, all subsidiary policies listed here will also be reviewed as part of this;

- [Student Accessibility Policy.](#)
- [Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy.](#)
- [Student Complaints Policy.](#)
- Fair Selection & Recruitment Policy - Internal use only
- [Gender Identity Policy.](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Sexual Harassment & Misconduct Policy.](#)
- [Wellbeing Policy.](#)

10) **Support for the policy**

10.1 Reporting Process

10.1.1 The College takes extremely seriously any reported cases whereby a student or staff at the college feels discriminated, harassed, bullied, or victimised. In any case whereby these charges are brought, the College will implement a full investigation of the incident(s) and resolve the situation quickly and sensitively. Where a person(s) are found to have breached this policy, either students or staff, formal disciplinary procedures will be followed, and where necessary reported to local authorities including the police.

10.1.2 Students wishing to report any incident can do so via the [Colleges Complaints Procedures](#), details of which are in the Student Regulations.

10.1.3 Staff wishing to report any incident should, where possible, in the first instance talk to their line manager.

10.1.4 Staff and students can disclose anonymously via our safe space reporting

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
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space which will be developed at the beginning of the 22/23 Academic year.

10.1.5 Please note if you disclose anonymously, we won't be able to contact you to offer any advice or support and reporting anonymously will not lead to formal action being taken. It does however alert us that something has happened and allows us to better understand the prevalence of issues within the OCA.

10.1.6 Members of the public can submit a complaint via email to enquiries@oca.ac.uk.

10.2 Support understanding the policy

10.2.1 If you are a disabled student and you would like to receive this procedure in an alternative format please contact the OCA's [Learner Support team](#)

10.2.2 If you live in Wales and require this policy in the Welsh language then please contact enquiries@oca.ac.uk

10.3 External support

https://www.report-it.org.uk/organisations_that_can_help