

Royal Agricultural University

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025



Introduction

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy sets out our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion for the next four years. It is a public declaration of our commitment to seek to develop a community that is fully inclusive, recruiting and retaining staff and students from all sectors of society.

Founded in 1845, the RAU has a long-standing reputation in learning, research, and consultancy. Undergraduate and postgraduate study is managed and taught by experienced staff and specialist consultants within an exciting learning environment in which our students play a pivotal role. The University is committed to promoting equality of access and outcome for all, celebrating diversity and providing an inclusive learning and work environment for students and staff. Our unique portfolio includes disciplines as varied as Rural Land Management, Real Estate, Business, Agriculture, Food, Environment and Equine matched by an extensive choice of research areas at Masters and Doctoral level.

The University maintains very strong links with its partners in industry. Courses are designed and updated to meet the demands of the market, both in the UK and worldwide, and employment rates for RAU graduates are amongst the highest in the country. We want all our staff, students and stakeholders to feel they are an integral part of the RAU community, and together we will create an inclusive culture where everyone can contribute to university life, knowledge and growth. The University intends to make this commitment a reality through this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Our Purpose and Mission

Our purpose is to cultivate care for the land and all who depend on it and our mission is to equip a new generation to thrive through change. We recognise that the achievement of these aims requires equality in participation, progression and success for all.

Our Values

At the RAU our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy incorporates our institutional values. Our commitment to a collaborative and open-minded way of working and resourceful, responsible and inclusive attitude confirm our strong responsibility to equality. We are seeking to develop a culture which values, respects and celebrates diversity making it a place where people want to work and study because they know that we take a pro-active approach to advancing equality.

Our values set out our attitude to embedding equality and promoting diversity and inclusion, including the way we lead and the way we work with each other and our partners. They promote a culture of respect, dignity and inclusivity.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

As a Higher Education provider, the RAU will continue to demonstrate how we meet the requirements of the Equality Act known as the Public Sector Equality Duty. It consists of a general duty and further specific duties. The general duty takes the form of broad equality requirements. The specific duties outline how we as a public body is required to go about achieving the general duty. Taken together the Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to be proactive in approach.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the University has 'due regard' of the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The RAU will use the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to drive equality, diversity and inclusion, meet our statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010, enhance our work with external bodies and support our continued success as a University.

The General Equality Duty requires the RAU to demonstrate how we ensure due regard to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to the characteristics highlighted within the strategy
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not

The General Equality Duty specifically outlines the following diverse characteristics (known as protected characteristics) against which the duties above will be considered:

- Age
- Disability, including learning disabilities
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

The RAU will endeavour to ensure that all aspects of the General Equality Duty are upheld by our staff, students and stakeholders through ongoing communication and consultation as well as monitoring and acting upon our equality data.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the RAU

The RAU recognises the following definitions of equality, diversity and inclusion:

Equality	ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally in relation to their needs
Diversity	acknowledging the range of difference within our community between individuals, cultural, social and intellectual contributions and seeking to utilise the talents and experiences that each one can bring to the RAU
Inclusion	working together with staff and students to create and implement flexible services, practices and procedures that take appropriate accounts of the needs of the RAU community, enabling each person to express themselves and realise their potential

The RAU acknowledges a need to increase our understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion, including the challenges that our students and staff may face, and to develop a culture which empowers individuals to raise issues and make change. Through the implementation of this Strategy, we wish to give due regard to the elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (as cited under the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty).

Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The RAU's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy seeks to demonstrate our commitment to work together to create a University community where diversity is recognised, valued and celebrated. We will seek to proactively advance equality and inclusive practice in our staff and student recruitment and admissions processes, in our research activity, in our teaching, within the campus environment and in the experiences we offer to our academic and professional services and the student community.

Our Strategic Objectives for enhancing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2021-2025

The RAU have identified areas of strength and areas for improvement, which have informed the creation of this Strategy. Our strategic objectives are summarised below:

1. Embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into all Aspects of University Life

At the RAU, we will seek to raise awareness and promote equality in a way that informs our culture and practices, is inclusive and removes any form of less favourable treatment or harassment. We seek to provide a learning, working, social and living environment which addresses the needs of our University community and which is accessible, safe and welcoming. To enable our commitment to equality and diversity and result in real change, this needs to be embedded into our structures and culture to help shape our behaviour.

Actions will include: ensuring everyone understands their responsibilities to foster an inclusive learning, working and social environment and are aware of relevant good practice policies, guidance and support services. We will work to ensure diversity is reflected in our decision-making bodies and committees, and that they actively contribute to promoting equality and inclusive practice. We will aim to develop accessibility and inclusive practices to accommodate the needs of our staff, students and visitors when considering our current campus and future developments. We are committed to ensuring that all our employment policies and practices for staff are fair, advance equality of outcome, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations. We will promote our commitment to a culture based on the principles of respect, dignity and inclusion for everyone.

2. Review and Revise the RAU's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Governance Structure

The delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda across the University may become more effective with the review and establishment of a more appropriate governance and management structure. A governance structure that ensures different points of views and perspectives from staff are represented, at different levels and functional responsibilities, and students, will enable the development of more informed and targeted approach and plans for the delivery of this work. Formal elements to this governance structure are the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Actions will include: a review of the RAU's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the development of revised terms of reference, membership and responsibilities.

3. Attract, Retain, Develop & Support a Diverse Staff and Student Population

Achievement of our objectives relies on equality in participation, progression and success for all. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will support the RAU's goal to attract, retain and develop a diverse university community and strive to ensure that everyone can attain and succeed to the best of their abilities. We seek to create a working, learning, social and living environment that will enable all our staff and students to achieve their potential, whilst they experience and celebrate diverse cultures, knowledge and identities and are encouraged to make a positive contribution to Cirencester, the land-based sector and beyond.

Actions will include: a review and revision of the staff Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy with a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion; ensuring we engage and inspire students from diverse backgrounds to apply to the RAU, at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and making sure our admissions processes are fair and inclusive; ensuring we monitor and address differences in outcomes and opportunities for our staff and student bodies, and promote equality in participation and progression.

4. Use Robust, Reliable Equalities Data to Target Activities

Underpinning the success of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the need has been identified to continuously improve a framework for robust and reliable equality data to be collected, analysed, reported and shared.

It is recognised that to ensure the actions we take to promote equality, diversity and inclusion are effective, we need to gather and analyse data on our staff and students as a function of their various protected characteristics, and this includes capturing data on the student experience. This will facilitate a clearer picture of variations in staff and student recruitment, progress and retention that are associated with diversity and allow us to more effectively monitor the impact of any policy or procedural initiatives. To demonstrate the seriousness of our intent to achieve real change, we also need to be as transparent as possible (within the proper bounds of individual confidentiality) about these data, how they compare to other universities and to national and international benchmarks.

Actions will include: Production of an annual diversity data report to include anonymised staff and students data, to facilitate the tracking of year-on-year changes and the identification of trends to provide an evidence-base to support other actions. To encourage staff to record and maintain their diversity details within the iTrent system. To build the confidence of staff and students in our ability to handle data confidentially and to use it responsibly.

Governance and Responsibilities

Responsibility for this Strategy and its delivery rests with the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group, championed by the Director for Research and supported by the Director of Human Resources. Work will be steered by the RAU's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in consultation with the staff, trade union, Students Union and students. Aspects of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are reported to the Governing Council through the Remuneration Committee.

Specific responsibilities include:

- **The RAU Community** - All staff and students and other stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure that their actions comply with the requirements of University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the University's Equality Strategy. This is to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and advance good relations between different equality groups.
- **The Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group** – is responsible for providing a consistent lead on equality and diversity issues, and for promoting equality and diversity strategies. The Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group will ensure that the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is implemented effectively and that appropriate action is taken against anyone within the University who does not act in accordance with the equality duties.
- **The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee** – has responsibility for the approval of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies, policies and procedures and for overseeing their implementation. The Committee reports to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group which has the authority to make decisions or to recommendations for approval.
- **All managers** – are responsible for ensuring that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is implemented and maintained within their area of responsibility, confirming all staff are fully informed about their responsibilities and receive support and training in carrying them out. Managers are responsible for taking appropriate action if they are aware of any acts of discrimination within their areas of responsibility, with support available from Human Resources.

Concerns and Complaints

At the RAU, there is a zero tolerance approach to bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation and it is important that any concerns or complaints are raised as soon as possible, promptly addressed and appropriate remedial action is taken.

Students are encouraged to raise concerns with a member of staff. Students who believe they have been subjected to discriminatory behaviour or harassment should refer to the Bullying and Harassment Policy or the Zero Tolerance Policy Statement on Sexual, Emotional, Physical Abuse, Violence or Harassment. Both policies are available on the University website and on request from Academic Services.

Staff who feel they have been subjected to discriminatory behaviour can make use of confidential services provided by the Employee Assistance Programme to discuss their concerns, or talk to a Harassment Advisor; contact details are available on the intranet or from the Human Resources department. Staff should refer to the University's Dignity at Work Policy and the Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure for further details, both of which can be accessed via the intranet or from Human Resources.

