Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Section 1 - Executive Summary

(1) The University of Newcastle (University) seeks to prioritise and embed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) into all aspects of its work. This priority is a legislative obligation of students, staff, executives, and the Council (refer to Clause 12). The University's commitment to EDI is evidenced by its institutional strategies, targeted action plans, values, people, and programs. This policy aims to create positive and inclusive learning and working environments.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) The University is committed to creating an inclusive and diverse environment that values the contributions of every member of its community. This Policy reaffirms the University's dedication to fostering a culture that embraces equal opportunity for students and staff.

(3) The purpose of this Policy is to:

a. formalise the University's equity, diversity, and inclusion guiding principles;
b. facilitate the University's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace and learning culture where diversity is represented, valued and respected;
c. contribute to a culture where people feel included, heard, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents;
d. contribute to a supportive and inclusive environment where all individuals can thrive, work toward reaching their full potential and drive organisational success;
e. specify accountability, complaint, and monitoring mechanisms to achieve all the above goals.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This policy applies to University students, staff, its Council and associated committees, professional and support services, controlled entities, and volunteers in all its settings (physical and digital), including students on external placement. The scope of the policy includes all research activities and academic program structures and delivery.

Section 4 - Audience

(5) This Policy applies to physical and digital spaces. All University students, staff, its Council, associated committees, controlled entities, contractors/subcontractors, volunteers, and personnel in the Work Integrated Learning context should read and understand it.

Section 5 - Definitions

(6) In the context of this document:

Defined Term	Meaning
Equity	Equity seeks to create fairness and justice for marginalised people. Equity is different to equality as it provides more than an equal distribution of resources. The practice of equity recognises disadvantage and power imbalances and the need for tailored, intentional, and comprehensive approaches to providing genuine pathways of access. Equity also includes challenging inequitable systems to increase access and inclusion.
Diversity	Diversity is recognising a range of human differences including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, caste, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, neurodiversity, physical and mental health, and religious and political beliefs.
Inclusion	Inclusion is the experience of being able to contribute meaningfully, to feel safe and a sense of belonging. To ensure inclusion, individuals must have equitable access to social, physical and digital environments and resources, be supported, valued and empowered. Inclusion also depends on the upholding of human rights and the affirmation of natural human diversity.
Intersectionality	Intersectionality brings light to the multiple overlapping social structures and identities, which, when combined, can produce inequitable relations of privilege and disadvantage. This can have a compound negative effect on the disadvantages and exclusions experienced by an individual person, or community of people, when ignored.
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Unit	Refers to the centralised staffed unit of the University responsible for developing and monitoring equity, diversity and inclusion strategy, policy and programs.
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee	Refers to the institutional committee that provides oversight and guidance over equity, diversity and inclusion matters relevant to the University. The Committee has membership from students and staff and has several sub-committees.

See the Appendix for Equity Cohorts and Descriptions

Section 6 - Guiding Principles

(7) The University values a community with a culture of care and belonging, which is built on the following five principles:

a. The University community strives to uphold human rights fully.
b. The University community strives for full inclusion.
c. The University community strives for full and effective accessibility.
d. The University community strives for excellence through diversity
e. The University community believes in the equity of people.
f. The University community believes in equity in opportunity.

Section 7 - Details

(8) The University is committed to being a leading advocate and driving force for excellence and equity in higher education. At the University, everyone has the right to participate, engage, and contribute. The University is committed to enabling the access and inclusion of its people through its strategies, action plans, services and programs.

Student Support and Access

(9) The University will provide equitable opportunities and support to all students, irrespective of their background or identity, to enable them to participate and thrive. Accommodations and resources are made available to equity cohorts to ensure equitable access to and inclusion in all aspects of the University.

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Staff Inclusivity

(10) The University will foster a supportive work environment that encourages diversity, inclusivity and equitable access to resources among all staff. In accordance with the Talent, Recruitment, and Appointment Policy and its associated procedures, recruitment, hiring, and promotion decisions will uphold principles of merit, fairness, transparency, equity and diversity. This commitment includes the recognition of non-linear career paths and achievement relative to opportunity.

Training and Development

(11) The University will offer ongoing quality training and professional learning opportunities for all students, staff, executives, and Council members to increase awareness of and build capacity in equity, diversity, and inclusion and cultural capability.

Workplace and Learning Environment Culture

(12) The University will work to create a learning and work environment culture that promotes respect, empathy, and open dialogue among all individuals, encouraging the exchange of diverse perspectives and ideas. Incidents of discrimination, harassment, or exclusion are addressed within prescribed timeframes within relevant University policies, and mechanisms for reporting such incidents are accessible to all. (For staff, please see the Staff Code of Conduct and Workplace Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination Policy. For students, please see the Student Code of Conduct; students and staff please see the Complaint Management Procedure).

Equity Cohorts

(13) As per the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the University recognises and is committed to supporting the following 12 equity cohorts by working toward full inclusion of each (see the Appendix for equity cohort descriptions). While these equity cohorts are specified, this EDI policy protects and promotes the inclusion and rights of all people.

a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
b. People who experience age-related discrimination;
c. People who are neurodivergent;
d. People of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and identities;
e. LGBTIQA+ communities;
f. People experiencing disadvantage from low socioeconomic backgrounds;
g. People who experience gender-based discrimination;
h. People living with disability;
i. People with chronic illness;
j. People experiencing mental health conditions;
k. People living in remote locations;
l. People who have experienced trauma.

Intersectionality

(14) In relation to the equity cohorts named previously, the University's policies and initiatives recognise individuals' intersecting identities and acknowledge the unique challenges faced by those with multiple marginalised identities.

Inclusive Language

(15) Language is constantly evolving to fit our developing understanding of our world and ourselves. Words can have different meanings and influence for various communities and individuals. The University acknowledges that the

language used throughout this policy reflects our understanding at the time of writing.

(16) The Student Code of Conduct and the Staff Code of Conduct establish the values for our staff and students. In accordance with these, all internal communications between University staff, students or external communication to the community, including digital, written, and oral communication, must be inclusive. Communication must avoid images, expressions, or language that reinforce inappropriate, demeaning, or discriminatory attitudes or assumptions about individuals or groups based on age, race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, political conviction, religious belief, disability, family responsibilities, or carers' responsibilities. Instead, communication should use images, expressions, or language that positively reflect the richness of social diversity and represent the University's and its community's cultural diversity, thereby contributing to a more harmonious and respectful University community. For further guidance, refer to the Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom.

Co-design

(17) The University will co-design policy, guidelines, procedures, and processes with equity cohorts, ensuring their voices and perspectives are integral to creating equity, diversity, and inclusion that permeate all its activities.

Data Collection and Evaluation

(18) Within the provisions of the University's Privacy Policy and Privacy Management Plan, the University will collect and analyse equity cohort data to inform decision-making and identify areas for improvement. The voices of equity cohorts will be prioritised through annual quantitative and qualitative data collection. Annual reports will be prepared and communicate our progress to the University community and stakeholders. Evaluation will also draw on peer-reviewed evidence.

Monitoring

(19) The Equity Diversity and Inclusion unit and the University Equity Diversity and Inclusion Committee will monitor the adherence to this policy, including periodic reviews, data collection, and feedback mechanisms from students, staff, and stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement and accountability in fostering an inclusive academic environment.

Section 8 - Appendices

(20) Equity Cohorts

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	10th December 2024
Review Date	10th December 2027
Approval Authority	University Council
Approval Date	1st November 2024
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Nathan Towney Deputy Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Equity +61 2 4055 3001
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Controlled entity" - Has the same meaning as in section 16A of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

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