**Gender Equality Plan (GEP)**

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1. **Purpose**
   1. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) contains the policies, plans and implementation actions of Northeastern University London (the University) to promote gender equality in all aspects of its activity, in particular employment, education, research and development, and service provision. It outlines Northeastern University London’s commitment to gender equality and the ongoing process of sustainable organisational change necessary to achieve it. The GEP establishes specific and measurable evidence-informed goals and detailed actions, measures and dedicated, proportionate resources that will allow us to achieve them.
2. **Scope**

2.1. The GEP applies to all University staff, students, service users and applicants. For the purpose of the GEP, ‘student’ includes undergraduate, postgraduate and apprenticeship learners.

2.2. The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way staff should treat each other, visitors, contractors, sub-contractors, service providers, suppliers, former staff and any other person associated with the University's functions.

1. **Introduction**
   1. The University is committed to providing an environment of equitable gender treatment, free from discrimination, harassment or victimization, where all members of its community are treated with respect and dignity. Consequently, the University is committed to promoting equality and non-discrimination for students, staff and service users in relation to all of the nine grounds specified in equality legislation.
   2. The University comprises a wide range of people with diverse backgrounds and circumstances, which we value and regard as a great asset. The University aims to create a culture of diversity within its community, providing a dynamic working environment, where all members are valued for their contribution and individuality. As part of the University’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, we strive to create an environment in which all members of our community should expect to be able to thrive, be respected and have a real opportunity to participate in and contribute to any new university activities so they can achieve their fullest potential.
2. **Aim**
   1. The University is proactively committed to creating a stimulating environment that values diversity, fairness, mutual respect and inclusion.
   2. We have set objectives, milestones and targets to enable the following:
      1. eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act2010;
      2. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
      3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
      4. promote diversity and inclusion as a widely recognized area of competitive strength;
      5. effectively integrate diversity and equity into NU London's corporate strategies, policies, assessment methods and management practice;
      6. create an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and where everyone is valued and respected.
   3. The University’s commitment to these aims ensures that:
      1. We are adequately equipped to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of staff and wider community and that;
      2. We create an inclusive environment that promotes dignity and mutual respect.
3. **Commitment to meet its legal obligations**

5.1. The GEP reflects the University’s commitment to meet all of its legal obligations regarding non-discrimination and to be proactive in promoting equality.

5.2. The University establishes this GEP in the context of compliance with the legal framework of the Equality Act (2010), which prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, as well as harassment and victimization in relation to the following nine equality grounds (for definitions see Schedule A to this GEP):

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

5.3. The Equality Act also protects people from discrimination based on association, meaning that people are protected if someone close to them falls under one of the protected characteristics.

5.4. Other legislation may relate to one or more of the nine equality grounds. The University will take this legislation into account in its policy development and gender equality practices.

5.5. Other factors that the University will consider include:

* Caring responsibilities (and the right to request flexible working arrangements)
* Trade Union activity
* Unrelated spent criminal convictions (see the University’s Data Protection Policy)
* Part-time or fixed term employment status
* Paternity, adoption, shared parental and bereavement leave status.

5.6. As a Higher Education Provider, the University is also committed to complying with the Specific Duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which includes publishing equality information annually, including gender pay gap data, and renewing and publishing specific measurable equality objectives every four years in a publicly accessible way.

1. **Responsibility for Implementation of the principles of Gender Equality**
   1. The Northeastern University London Board are responsible for the governance and oversight of the affairs of the University.
   2. The University has a Director of Belonging who shall be responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of the actions described in this GEP, and for the further development and monitoring of the University’s policies and practices in relation to gender equality and diversity. Moreover, the Director of Belonging has an advisory role to the Executive Committee and will support the University in implementing this GEP and in reporting on the implementation of this GEP and the progress in the goals laid down in this GEP.
   3. Staff are responsible for understanding and implementing this plan and contacting their line manager or the Director of Belonging with any questions or observations. They are also responsible for setting a good example by treating all members with dignity and respect.
   4. The University shall ensure that staff and students know how to report discrimination, bullying and harassment and that reporting incidents does not result in victimisation.
   5. The University shall deal with complaints fairly, thoroughly, quickly and confidentially.

## Work-life balance and organizational culture

* 1. The University’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy applies to all employees, students, potential students and job applicants. A particular focus of the University is to establish a culture for advancing gender equality by ensuring a proper work-life balance that permits its employees and students to advance their career alongside personal responsibilities that they hold outside their workplace at the University.
  2. The University’s practices to support this aim shall include:
     1. Gathering of data on employee satisfaction with gender equality and current policies as well as organizational culture;
     2. Gathering of data on employee needs in relation to work-life balance;
     3. Establish and continuously review existing policies and arrangements, e.g. for parental leave, flexible working time, support for caring responsibilities, workload management, advice and support, other measures;
     4. Enabling arrangements and implementing policies on:
        + Parental leave (e.g. automatically extending contracts in case of parental leave);
        + Gender Transition
        + Flexible working time (e.g. allowing flexible hours or part-time work);
        + Sabbaticals;
        + Support for caring responsibilities (childcare and care for other dependents like elderly relatives and people with disabilities);
        + Workload management, such as the distribution of research, teaching and administrative tasks;
        + Reintegration of staff after career breaks, such as parental leave or sabbatical;
        + Mentoring or buddy-program for new joiners;
        + Specific contacts for mental wellbeing and other issues related to work-life balance;
        + Advice and support on work-life balance;
  3. The Director of Belonging will oversee the University’s implementation of this GEP with respect to the above-mentioned activities aiming to establish a culture for advancing gender equality by ensuring a proper work-life balance. HR will be responsible for implementing the above policies and procedures and will work with line managers to ensure they are understood and used appropriately.

## Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

* 1. The University is committed to improving gender balance in leadership and decision-making. To these ends, the University will review the composition of its leadership roles with respect to gender and investigate and, where possible, implement policies that improve gender balance in the University’s leadership and decision-making. The University will publish an annual report summarizing its actions and progress made to improve gender balance in the University’s leadership and decision-making.
  2. The University’s actions to improve gender balance in leadership and decision-making include:
     1. Gather data on how different genders are represented Senior Leadership roles in the University and benchmark the data against any sector level targets.
     2. Gather data on progression rates of all genders.
     3. Analyse gender as it intersects with other protected characteristics. For example, we need to understand how we are performing in terms of equality of opportunity for women of colour or women with a disability etc.
     4. Review if there are any barriers to ensure women and men represent the University equally.
     5. Provide all senior leaders and decision-makers with (online) gender equality training, including training to mitigate (unconscious) selection bias and (conscious and unconscious) interactional bias;
     6. Provide support and training to female employees to achieve leadership and decision-making roles;
     7. Set up a leadership/mentoring program using our existing synergy networks, targeted specifically at the underrepresented genders.

## Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

* 1. In order to improve gender balance in relation to recruitment and progression, the University will take specific action, including:
     1. Review language used in adverts and job descriptions for unconscious gender bias, and ensure they do not exclude any potential applicant or include any unnecessary requirements that would unfairly exclude an applicant with respect to any of the nine protected characteristics;
     2. Ensure open, transparent and publicly advertised job roles.
     3. Identify and remove any unnecessary barriers that might impede the application or selection of an eligible candidate with respect to any of the nine protected characteristics.
     4. Gather data on applicants' gender to assess gender representation in University recruitment processes;
     5. Provide gender equality and bias training for any decision-makers involved in decisions concerning recruiting within the University;
     6. Require hiring managers to justify any recruitment shortlists that do not include women;
     7. Select candidates on the basis of merit and ensure that the candidate with the most suited skills, competencies and experience is selected.
     8. Ensure there is no discrimination (either directly or indirectly) against any applicant to employment in relation to any of the nine protected characteristics:
     9. Gather data on staff gender to assess gender representation in the University staff population.
     10. Ensure open and transparent promotion procedures;
     11. Ensure there is no discrimination (either directly or indirectly) against any promotion application in relation to any of the nine protected characteristics;
     12. Involve the Director of Belonging or HR in promotion committees (e.g. to review if there is any unconscious gender bias);
     13. Provide gender equality and bias training for any decision-makers involved in decisions concerning career progression within the University;
     14. Gather data on progression rates for academic staff of all genders, to assess gender representation of those who progress through the academic ranks within the University.
  2. The University will report annually on the gender distribution in relation to new recruitments and promotions, including the measures taken to improve the gender balance in these areas.

## Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

* 1. The University has responsibility to provide training and peer to peer learning opportunities for Faculty staff including integrating gender equality through course planning, course review and course assessment. Teaching staff are also responsible for promoting and integrating gender equality through their teaching of the course syllabus, and through relations with students, staff, and the wider community.
  2. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is a national exercise in assessing the impact of research. Northeastern University - London will be submitting for the first time to REF2029. The data of submitted participants is analysed by equality protected groups, including sex and ethnicity. The findings will be used to develop institutional responses and deliver the commitment for an inclusive researcher community.
  3. The University will endeavour to integrate the gender dimension into its research activities, recognising that this may vary depending on the scale and resources of individual projects. To support this aim, the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Services will:
     1. Encourage researchers to consider gender issues in their research designs, where appropriate and feasible.
     2. Include the consideration of gender issues as part of internal quality assurance and approval processes, where relevant (e.g. as an optional element in internal peer review).
     3. Support and promote gender-related research and publications through internal initiatives and communications.
     4. Track and report on research projects and publications that voluntarily include a gender dimension, as part of broader equality, diversity, and inclusion monitoring.

## Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

* 1. The University is committed to strictly combat and apply a zero-tolerance policy with respect to gender-based violence and sexual harassment, including behavior that violates any individual’s dignity or that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

In this respect, the University has:

* + 1. Established a code of conduct setting out expected behaviors of employees:
    2. Established a Sexual Misconduct Policy which includes a clear definition of actions that the University considers sexual misconduct;
    3. Established a report and support mechanism that enables staff and students to report any incidents of gender-based violence (including anonymous reporting) and describes the investigation process step-by-step;
    4. Established contacts for impacted people, giving advice and information to victims or witnesses of gender-based violence in case a report has been made;
    5. Established a policy containing specific disciplinary measures as well as guidance and support for reporting to the police and for legal proceedings against suspected abusers or harassers, including court cases;
    6. Established mandatory DEI related training for staff and students.
  1. The University also offers practical support such as (external) counselling to victims or witnesses of gender-based violence.
  2. The University will report annually on its measures, campaigns and policies to prevent gender-based violence and sexual harassment, which shall be included in the University’s annual DEI report.

# Action Plan for Implementation of the GEP

* 1. The University will promote equality of opportunity for all by taking the following measures:
     1. Ensure that services and opportunities for staff are, as far as reasonably possible, accessible to all;
     2. Ensure that existing staff, as well as those who seek to apply to work with the University, are treated fairly and that individuals are judged solely on merit and by reference to their skills, abilities, qualifications, aptitude and potential;
     3. Ensure that all contractors and service providers operating on behalf of the University are aware of this policy and are expected to adhere to it;
     4. Ensure that publicity and promotional activities reflect the diversity of the University and enhance its overall image.
     5. Set up Gender Equality Working Group, a subcommittee of the DEI committee to monitor the above actions.
     6. Work with Data Governance and HR to get the required equality data to ensure compliant and accurate data is used.
     7. Monitor and to report on gender equality actions and add to/ adapt its gender equality plan as needed.
  2. Specifically, the University shall implement the gender equality actions as set out in the Gender Equality Action Plan in Appendix B to this GEP.

# Complaints and Monitoring

* 1. Staff or other parties who make a complaint of discrimination have the right to do so without fear of victimization and the University shall make every effort to ensure victimization does not occur and that complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly.
  2. The University takes seriously any allegations of harassment, discrimination, bullying or victimization, and shall investigate them thoroughly. Any member of staff found guilty of unlawful discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Any member of the public, visitor or service provider involved in allegations of discrimination or harassment, will also be subject to appropriate action. Staff knowingly making untrue or malicious comments will be subject to disciplinary procedures.
  3. The University will use the information gathered to improve its equality performance and it will be held and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

1. **Appendix A - Definitions**
   1. In this GEP, the following terms have the following meaning:

* **Age** – a person’s age.
* **Disability** - a long term physical or mental condition that has a negative effect on a person's movements, senses, or activities and on the ability to do normal daily activities.
* **Gender reassignment** - a process that involves changing physiological or other attributes of sex to reassign a person's gender.
* **Marriage and civil partnership** – Legal unions that are available to both same sex and opposite couples. A civil partnership is entered into by signing a civil partnership document while marriage is entered by vows.
* **Pregnancy and maternity** – the state of being pregnant or expecting a baby, breastfeeding, or have recently given birth and being on leave from work.
* **Race** - a particular physical appearance, skin colour, social factor and cultural background.
* **Religion or belief** - a person’s religious or philosophical belief, background, outlook or lack of.
* **Sex** - a person’s gender identity including – but not limited to – male, female, transgender or non-binary.
* **Sexual orientation** - a person’s sexual orientation including – but not limited to – gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual.
* **Diversity** - understanding, appreciating and embracing differences. Empowering people by practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that make them different.
* **Equity** – being fair and impartial. Recognising that people don't all start from the same place and acknowledging and adjusting to imbalances.
* **Inclusion** - a sense of belonging; feeling respected and valued; feeling a level of support and commitment from others so that one can achieve their best at work.

1. **Appendix B - Gender Equality Action Plan 2024 – 2028**

This overview should summarise all gender equality actions described in the operative part of the GEP above. Specifically, it should contain information on specific actions the University will take to improve gender equality, consistent with the information described above.

To better understand the nature of this overview, we have included some examples of specific gender equality actions below. These actions will be considered through the SMART methodology so it is clear when/how often these actions will take place, if they are measurable etc.

***Actions for promoting work-life balance and organizational culture***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Role / Area in charge** | **Success measurement**  **(SMART)** |
| 1.1 | Create survey for staff on work-life balance related issues like parental leave, flexible working time and other issues. | Find out if there is demand for specific work-life balance related policies. | April 2025 | August 2025 | Director of Belonging/ HR | Survey created and conducted;  50% completion rate of survey. Survey completed bi annually. |
| 1.2 | Purchase mandatory online training on gender equality issues. | Emphasize importance of gender equality to staff. | April 2025 | Sept 2025 | HR | Training researched, purchased and rolled out and completed annually. Use Astute platform to host training. |
| 1.3 | Continue to offer online exit survey with all leavers. | Understand if there are gender related reasons for people leaving the University. | Ongoing | Ongoing | HR | Target 70% completion rate of exit survey. |

***Actions for promoting gender balance in leadership and decision-making***

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Role / Area in charge** | **Success measurement**  **(SMART)** |
| 2.1. | From Workday, gather snapshot annual data of genders in management positions at the University. | Identify any underrepresentation of specific genders. | April 2025 | Ongoing | Director of Belonging/ HR | Data gathered and actions agreed to improve data – data published in April each year.  . |
| 2.2. | Investigate leadership programme for underrepresented genders. | Encourage people with underrepresented genders to apply for leadership positions. | May 2025 | Ongoing | Director of Belonging/ HR | Leadership programme set up and rolled out on an annual basis. |
| 2.3. | Provide mandatory guidelines and training for managers on salary determination | Remove / avoid the gender pay gap. | July 2025 | Oct 2025 | HR | Guidelines and training rolled out;  Target: 50% of all managers by Oct 2025. |

***Actions for promoting gender equality in recruitment and career progression***

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Role / Area in charge** | **Success measurement**  **(SMART)** |
| 3.1. | Review job description template to ensure it is gender neutral and provide more information to candidates including  - adding a section to promote family friendly initiatives.  - ensuring all aspects of the academic role are reflected and valued equally.  - considering if roles can be advertised on a part-time/job share basis.  - engage in positive action, (for example actively encouraging applications for professor level jobs for a particular gender if that gender is underrepresented at that rank). | Ensure that job descriptions attract the widest possible audience. | May 2025 | Ongoing | HR | Job description templates continuously reviewed and revised. |
| 3.2. | Continue to produce an annual gender pay gap report in line with legislation. | Find out if there is a gender pay gap at the University. | March 2025 | Ongoing | HR | Annual reporting mechanism enhanced to enable publication on NU London website in April each year. |

***Actions for promoting the integration of the gender dimension into teaching and research content***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Role / Area in charge** | **Success measurement**  **(SMART)** |
| 4.1. | Develop guidelines for research responsible staff on the gender dimension in research | Create a knowledge base for gender-related research among researchers | April 2025 | Sept 2025 | Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange | Guidelines and any associated training rolled out |
| 4.2. | Develop annual reporting mechanism on the integration of the gender dimension into NU London research responsible staff. | To understand how much NU London research responsible staff include the gender dimension within their research. | July 2025 | Ongoing | Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange | Annual reporting mechanism developed |
| 4.3. | Review academic leavers data on gender, to try and identify why academic staff leave the HE research and teaching profession (for example possible early career females dropping out due to inadequate support etc). | To understand data and try to find ways of enabling leavers to continue their work at NU London. | Oct 2025 | Ongoing | Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange | Need to get a year’s worth of leavers data from Workday to enable us to get enough data to review. |

***Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment***

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Role / Area in charge** | **Success measurement**  **(SMART)** |
| 5.1. | Continue to enhance the Report and Support platform, based on feedback and updates from Culture Shift. | Enabling impacted people to report sexual harassment incidents; procedure of NU London to handle such complaints. | Ongoing | Ongoing | Director of Student Engagement/ HR Director | Annual enhancement of reporting mechanism. Monthly promotion of mechanism through newsletters, staff meetings, students gatherings etc. |
| 5.2. | Review and update Sexual Misconduct Policy | Build structures to prevent and pursue sexual harassment incidents. | Find out next review date | Annually? | Director of Student Engagement/ HR Director | Continuation of policy and training development and roll out. |
| 5.3. | Review disciplinary measures against perpetrators, using data from Student Regulatory Resolution Office (students) and HR (staff). | Ensure measures are consistent and fair across the organization. | May 2025 | Ongoing | Director of Student Engagement/ HR Director | Disciplinary policy updated and communicated to NU London staff. Annual data on measures provided to ExCo for review. |
| 5.4. | Continue to develop annual reporting mechanism on sexual harassment cases at NU London. | Track sexual harassment cases. | Ongoing | Ongoing | Director of Student Engagement/ HR Director | Annual reporting mechanism developed;  Target: Sexual Harassment cases reduced each year. |

# Version history

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