Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Community Policy

2026-27

1. Policy statement

- As a non-residential Theological Education Institution (TEI) in the North East of England, Lindisfarne College of Theology (LCT) offers training to lay and ordained ministry students from different Dioceses in the Church of England and delivers theology, ministry and mission qualifications (Common Awards, FHEQ Levels 4 – 7) validated by Durham University.
- This policy therefore sets out our commitment to work within what is currently permitted by the Church of England to be an organisation that is as diverse, equal and inclusive as we can make it.
- We are committed to being an equal opportunities employer and to creating a supportive and inclusive environment where staff and students in all their unique differences feels a sense of belonging and can flourish, irrespective of physical appearance, sex, race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- LCT, as a Christian organisation resourcing local Church of England Churches, believes that a church is the community of God's people and recognises that all people are of equal importance in the eyes of God. We are committed to the principles and practices of equality – fairly and consistently treating each person according to their diverse needs and valuing our differences.
- LCT will not discriminate or treat any individual less favourably on the grounds of sex, gender reassignment, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.
- We will challenge discrimination in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Sometimes we have to treat people differently, for example in order to accommodate a disability or to meet occupational requirements for a position.
- Some posts may give rise to an Occupational Requirement that the post holder has a commitment to the Christian faith.
- This policy is intended to address unlawful discrimination.

Current equality legislation and associated codes of practice are considered, including, but not limited to the: Equality Act 2010; Employment Rights Act 1996; Part time working regulations 2000; Rehabilitation of Offenders Act; Equal Pay Act 1970; Employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended).

2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the light of the LCT Vision

Our aim is for everyone at LCT to feel that they belong and are valued for who they are and what they contribute.

This policy sets out our legal obligations and commitment within the framework of the Church of England, to acknowledge our diversity and to better reflect the communities we serve.

Our vision statement affirms how we live:

We are committed to being a community who are faithful to Christ, in

- *training to be servant-hearted disciples today and tomorrow*
- *sharing a Christ-shaped love for our region and its people*
- *including people of all Christian traditions and at all study levels*

In this work we strive to:

- treat everyone fairly and with dignity and respect;
- create a working and learning environment that promotes dignity and respect for everyone;
- promote equality of opportunity for learning and development;
- challenge discrimination including unconscious bias and microaggression;
- be a place where everyone can flourish and reach their full potential, and where we will respond positively to different needs and circumstances;
- ensure that the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded within our recruitment, appointment and people management processes, as well as within our training programmes;
- encourage anyone who feels they have been subject to discrimination to raise their concerns so we can learn as a community and address mistakes.

3. Definitions

Protected characteristics refer to the nine characteristics that are protected in the Equality Act (2010). The nine protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Equality is about fairness. It is not about treating everyone in the same way, but it recognises that everyone's needs are met in different ways. It is based on the legal obligation to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. Equality protects people from being discriminated against on the grounds of protected characteristics.

Diversity is to recognise, respect and value the differences and the gifts that everyone has, and to embrace them to their fullest.

Inclusion is to foster a learning environment that allows and enables people with different backgrounds, characteristics, abilities, opinions and ways of thinking to work together, grow together and flourish.

Positive action is when an organisation takes positive steps to help or encourage certain groups to participate in an activity or overcome or minimise disadvantages. For example, offering leadership development training to women when an organisation has identified that those women are under-represented in senior leadership roles.

Discrimination means treating a person unfairly because of who they are or because they possess certain characteristics. This is unlawful discrimination when based on protected characteristics. Discrimination can occur in the following forms:

i. **Direct discrimination** is where a person is treated less favourably than others (in the same or similar circumstances) due to a protected characteristic.

ii. **Indirect discrimination** is when a condition or requirement adversely affects one particular group considerably more than other groups, and which cannot be justified in terms of the requirements for performing the job.

iii. **Discrimination by perception** is where a person is directly discriminated against based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic, even if that is not the case.

iv. **Discrimination by association** is where a person is directly discriminated against because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Unconscious bias (also known as implicit bias) is when we make judgments or decisions about an individual or group of people on the basis of our prior experiences, our own deep-seated thought patterns, assumptions, social stereotypes or interpretations. Much of the time we are unaware that we are doing it, hence 'unconscious'. Actively choosing to judge or make decisions about someone because of who they are is **prejudice**.

Microaggression is a statement, action or incident that is regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group, such as a racial or ethnic minority. It is, therefore, important to acknowledge and recognise discrimination, unconscious bias and microaggression whenever they happen, as they can impact individual and or group relationships sometimes with detrimental consequences – whether it's at work, ministry or just in our lives in general.

Occupational Requirement – The Equality Act 2010 provides some exemptions that apply to the work environment which allow employers to require employees to have (or not have) certain protected characteristics. These are called Occupational Requirements (OR), and the burden is on the employer to show that there is an occupational requirement attached to a particular job role. A typical example within the Church would be the post carries a genuine occupational requirement to be a practising Christian.

Reasonable Adjustments - Under the Equality Act 2010 (unlawful discrimination legislation), employers are required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff. This means making changes to a disabled person's environment or the way their employment is structured to mitigate any disadvantages allowing them to work safely and productively. This may include removing physical barriers, providing extra support, and providing flexibility.

4. The Scope of this Policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

This policy applies to any action, actual or verbal, pertaining to fair and equal treatment that is committed, or is alleged to have been committed by, any member of the LCT community. It sets out the responsibilities of all who are associated with the College, whether students, core staff, associate tutors and supervisors, or Trustees.

The policy applies to all processes relating to every area of the College's business and how it is conducted, including but not limited to:

- staff recruitment
- pay, terms and conditions
- training and development opportunities
- student recruitment and enrolment
- delivery of teaching, supervision, and support
- any dealings with those associated with LCT in any way.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- LCT is responsible for acting to prevent incidents of unequal treatment wherever reasonably possible and to provide preventive guidance regarding such behaviours.
- LCT is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is effectively communicated to all staff, trustees and students, and is also readily available to the public.
- All members of the LCT community have a responsibility to ensure a working and studying environment where everyone is treated with equal respect and dignity.
- Every person is expected to contribute to preventing unacceptable behaviours through self-awareness, by modelling positive behaviour, and by raising any concerns regarding inappropriate treatment they have received or witnessed.
- All staff and students representing LCT in another contexts (e.g. a church, placement context or other learning environments such as residential teaching venues and conferences) should comply with this Policy.
- LCT's Vice-Principal and the Chaplains can provide support independently of the procedures in place under this policy, but within its intentions.

6. Compliance with this Policy

- Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and this policy is without exception the responsibility of all students, staff, and trustees of LCT.
- It is a requirement of employment in the case of staff and enrolment in the case of students, that every individual abides by this Policy, and any breach may lead to disciplinary action.
- A serious breach of the Equality Act may also result in LCT and/or the individual being held liable in law.

7. Non-compliance with this Policy – how to raise a concern or complaint

Community Meetings

Each term students are provided with corporate opportunity to discuss any concerns they have in relation to any area of their life at LCT including matters relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, during student led community meetings. The resultant feedback is then reported to the Principal for discussion and as necessary further action. In turn and within the bounds of confidentiality, the Principal will report back to the student body about any resultant actions.

Raising a concern

Any member of the LCT community, seeking to raise a confidential concern about how they or another member of the community has been treated in relation to this Policy should contact the Vice-Principal who takes a lead in championing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at LCT. If the concern being raised pertains to the Vice-Principal, then the Principal should be contacted.

Complaints

LCT will ensure that any individual or group who wish to make a complaint are properly represented in any complaints' proceedings. Any individual who feels that they have been treated unfairly in connection with their involvement in the College should raise the matter through the Complaints Procedure as outlined in the LCT Complaints Policy, when every effort will be made to secure a satisfactory resolution. In addition, LCT will ensure that any staff, student or trustee making a complaint (or any staff, student or trustee assisting or representing them) will be protected from any victimisation.

8. Reviewing this Policy

Opportunities to help all staff, trustees and students to understand LCT's expectations and their own responsibilities will be provided annually.

The trustees are responsible for:

- Ensuring that LCT as a registered charity and Theological Education Institution stays within the Policy and other relevant legislation, and meets all of its duties, monitoring and reviewing the outworking of this Policy on an annual basis.

The Principal is responsible for:

- Giving a consistent lead on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues.
- Promoting the Policy and ensuring that all staff and students are familiar with and observe the Policy.
- Following the relevant procedures and taking any necessary action where staff or students have behaved in a way which goes against LCT's aims and values as set out in this Policy.
- Reporting to the Board of Trustees instances where the Policy has not been adhered to by a member of staff or student at LCT.

All staff, trustees and students are responsible for:

- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Participating in training and learning opportunities which promote education around equality, diversity and inclusion and challenging discrimination.

9. Support and guidance

Below are some links for further advice, guidance and support:

Diversity & Inclusion - Durham University

Diversity & Inclusion | The Church of England

Racial Justice - Newcastle Diocese

LGBTQI+ Chaplaincy - Newcastle Diocese

Equality, diversity, and inclusion - Diocese of Durham

Trade Union, Unions UK, Workers Union - Unite the union (offering membership to faith leaders and support in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)

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