

THE COUNCIL

Diversity Policy

UPDATED 02.02.2022

Purpose

1. The Council Diversity Policy sets out the approach to diversity on the Council of the OU, and seeks to ensure that equality and diversity in its broadest sense is a significant feature of the Council.
2. The Policy is approved by the Council on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee.

Scope of Application

3. The Policy applies to the membership of the Council and its Committees. Equality and diversity in relation to staff and students of the OU is covered by the OU's Equality Scheme.

Policy Statement

4. The Council recognises the benefits of having a diverse governing body, and sees increasing diversity and breadth of experience on the Council as an essential element in delivering the OU's mission and its strategic plan.
5. A diverse governing body will include and make good use of differences in the skills, knowledge, experience and other distinctions between governors, including protected characteristics¹, socio-economic background and geographical location. The Council respects the rights of individuals to hold different beliefs and views, and to express them through appropriate contribution to discussion. A diversity of perspectives will promote more constructive and challenging debate at Council meetings, thereby helping to avoid 'groupthink' and improving governance outcomes.
6. As far as is possible and practicable, the Council will make every effort to recruit and maintain within its composition an appropriate balance of all protected characteristics. All applicants for vacancies on the Council will be treated solely on the basis of their abilities and potential. All appointments will be made on merit, in the context of the skills, experience and independence that the Council as a whole requires to be effective.

Objectives

7. To ensure that the Council will always comprise at least 40% women, 40% men and be inclusive of gender diversity.

¹ age, caring and dependency, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation

8. To address underrepresentation and ensure diversity, the Council will include at least 30% of people who are disabled, ethnic minority, religious minority, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender by 2022/23
9. To ensure that at least one-third of the Council will always be comprised of members aged 55 or under.²
10. To ensure that at least 20% of the Council's membership drawn from ethnic minorities.
11. To only engage recruitment agencies who have signed up to the Voluntary Code of Conduct for Executive Search Firms on gender and race diversity and best practice.
12. To use Positive Action (Equality Act, 2010) to recruit and select Council members
13. To ensure that candidate briefs give significant weight to relevant skills, underlying competencies and personal capabilities, and not just proven career experience.
14. Within the first six months of appointment, it is recommended that Council members undertake the 'Union Black: Britain's Black cultures and steps to anti-racism' training and a suite of relevant EDI educational courses.

Review

15. The Governance and Nominations Committee will review the Policy annually, which will include an assessment of the effectiveness of the Policy and the continuing relevance of the objectives, and recommend any revisions to the Council for approval.

² To confirm that members will not be required to step down during their term of office in order to accommodate this objective.