

**Equality and Diversity Report**  
**School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research**  
**University of Kent: Canterbury**  
**December: 2008**

The School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research (SSPSSR) recently undertook a self assessment audit of current equality and diversity practices within the department. The objective was to understand in what areas best practice equality and diversity policies were being implemented and in what areas policies could be further built upon. On completing this self assessment an action plan for improving policy in this area has been developed. This report aims to complement the action plan and to provide an overview of areas where we are achieving high standards and areas where we could do more to promote equality and diversity within the department.

**General Overview**

The department, as a whole, already shows a strong commitment to equality and diversity practices as evidenced by its appointment of an equality and diversity representative, its regular dissemination of equality and diversity information and events to staff and student members, its maintenance of a log detailing staff and student complaints in this area, its inclusion of equality and diversity as standard agenda items at staff meetings and its discussion of equality and diversity information at staff induction. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that cultural and ethnic diversity forms a core part of the curriculum in many subject areas within the department. In particular, departmental strengths lie in the way that it deals with staff or students both with physical disabilities and with learning difficulties. In terms of learning difficulties, for example, provision has been made for inclusive assessment methods and practices to aid disadvantaged students in their methods of learning have been implemented.

There are, however, areas in which departmental practice could be improved. For example, currently, there is no single place for staff or students to obtain comprehensive information about equality and diversity policy and procedures, contact details of representatives and counsellors and day to day notices about equality and diversity. To date, the department has not sought consultation with students themselves about which areas of equality and diversity could be improved. While the department is strong in the areas of disability and learning difficulties there are other areas which come under the auspices of equality and diversity that have not received as high a degree of attention, for example, age or religious practices. It is these areas which the department will seek to expand on over the next three years as outlined below.

## **2009-2010**

Over the course of this year the department will seek to improve its dissemination of equality and diversity information to both staff and students. This will primarily be achieved by the introduction of a web page dealing specifically with equality and diversity as part of the SSPSSR general web pages. This website will be used to promote our departmental policies and procedures on equality and diversity, advertise events and training opportunities, list details of staff and student contacts, provide a place of publication for this report and the departmental action plan that it complements and generally providing a point of first contact for people wishing to find out more about departmental practices in this area. In addition to the launch of the web page, information in staff and student handbooks will be updated and expanded to include our departmental statement of equality and diversity, a list of contact details and a link to the new web page. An equality and diversity presentation will also be developed as part of the general student departmental induction. Finally, the department will seek to appoint a student equality and diversity representative and will work with them to elicit general feedback from students on issues of equality and diversity and how the department could improve or build upon existing policies. A brief report on progress will be made at the end of the year.

## **2010-2011**

The department currently stores information about both staff and students in terms of age, gender, race and disability but, to date, this information has not been analysed or published. During this year the department will aim to collate this data, analyse it and present it in a publishable form for inclusion on the equality and diversity web page. Where possible, comparisons will also be undertaken with other departments within the University and across different Universities. Discussion will be undertaken to determine whether it is appropriate to begin to collect information on staff and student religious beliefs and sexuality. Finally, student feedback on equality and diversity practices will be evaluated, the results will be published on the web page and, where appropriate, improvements will begin to be made. A brief report on progress will be made at the end of the year.

## **2011-2012**

In the final year of this action plan, the department will seek to extend standard equality and diversity practices in the areas of disability, gender, race and age to the less focused upon areas of religious belief and sexuality. It will aim to ensure that all practices and procedures implemented at the Canterbury campus are also adopted at the Medway campus. Finally, it will seek to further work with students to specifically monitor and assess the curriculum in terms of equality and diversity by different groups (e.g. age, gender, race etc.). Work will also be undertaken to maintain the website and keep staff and students informed of all

developments in this important area. A brief report on progress will be made at the end of the year.