

**The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama**

**Single Equality Scheme**

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## **1 Purpose of the Single Equality Scheme**

This document explains why Equality and Diversity is vital to Central and explains initiatives that will be taken to encourage a positive approach to Equality and Diversity.

Central wishes to embrace the spirit of Equality and Diversity by bringing together into one place all of its policies regarding equality of opportunity and the diversity of the School's community so that it can support informed decisions, actions, policies, processes and practices. The Single Equality Scheme will bring together ways in which Central School of Speech & Drama seeks to monitor, enhance and celebrate Equality and Diversity in its culture, ethos and operation.

This Single Equality Scheme serves as an umbrella document for all Equality and Diversity Policies and will be the document under which future Equality and Diversity Policies will sit.

### **1.2 Publication and Ownership of the Single Equality Scheme**

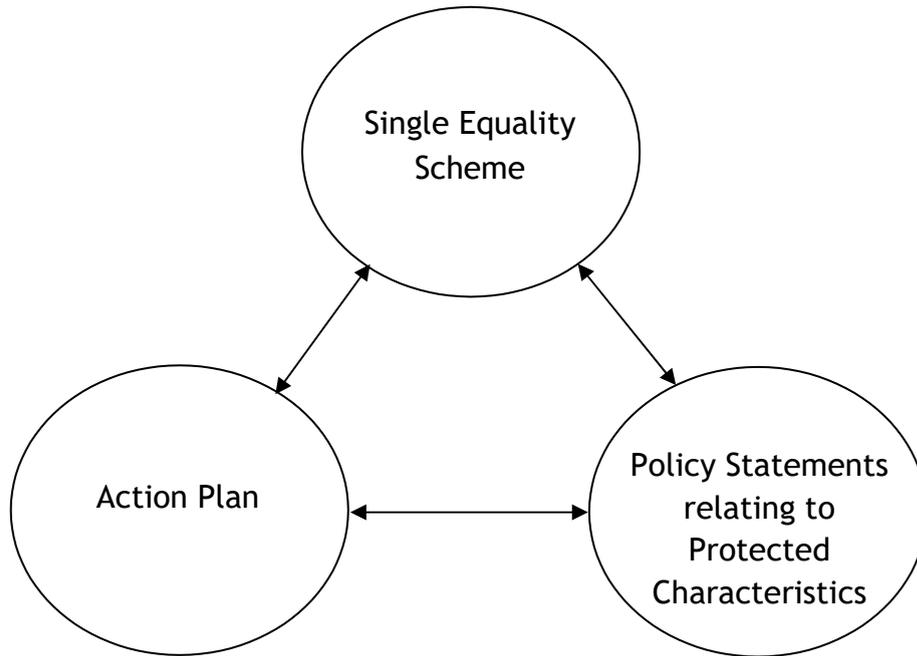
Central's Single Equality Scheme is published on our website.

The Equality and Diversity Committee, in association with the relevant department heads, academic course leaders and the Clerk to the Board of Governors, will ensure that the scheme is disseminated to all relevant parties, ensuring that staff, students and Governors are aware of their duties and responsibilities in relation to the Single Equality Scheme. For example, Human Resources will issue the scheme to all new staff during induction programmes and the Academic Registrar's office /Student Union President will ensure the scheme is readily available to all students.

In addition, all third party relationships with Central (whether they are visitors, hosts, contractors, visiting professionals etc) will adhere to the Scheme and embrace Central's positive culture as it relates specifically to Equality and Diversity.

### 1.3 The Single Equality Scheme

The Single Equality Scheme interacts with two other key documents and should be read in conjunction with them: the Equality and Diversity Action Plan and The Policy Statements for Equality related to each Protected Characteristic<sup>1</sup>. The Scheme, the Action Plan and the Policy Statements on Equality for the specific Protected Characteristics work together in a dynamic way so that the scheme can be responsive to future changes. It might be helpful to think of the scheme expressed as:



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<sup>1</sup> See Section 4 for a description of Protected Characteristics.

## **2 Background Information**

Like most Higher Education Institutions, and as part of our responsibility as a public body/employer, Central developed discrete policies in relation to Equality and Diversity, for example the Disability Equality Scheme, Race Equality Scheme and the Gender Equality Scheme. Although these Schemes were effective, on occasions the administration and implementation of certain targets within each scheme has been slow as the management/oversight of objectives has not been efficiently synchronised.

With the introduction of further Protected Characteristics in October 2010 (Equality Act 2010), Central wanted to ensure it had a solid framework that supports us in demonstrating due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups;
- foster good relations between people from different groups in a quick, flexible and robust way.

Hence the creation of the Single Equality Scheme.

The Single Equality Scheme will represent Central's ethos and culture as it relates to Equality and Diversity, will present the principles of Equality and Diversity within a small specialist institution and will specify how the Scheme aims to deliver effectively on a year by year basis.

## **3 Central's Ethos and Culture**

As indicated in the mission statement, Central places Equality and Diversity at its heart by "opening doors to our disciplines for new thinkers, makers and practitioners in dispersed and diverse communities and seeking to lead participation in varied but interrelated communities of interest and study". To this end, Central will rise to the challenges that Equality and Diversity presents to organisations and cultures and in response endeavour to eliminate and prevent discrimination and to promote good relations and equality of opportunity.

Central also recognises that Equality and Diversity matters are a fluid and rapidly developing area where new ideas may challenge previous forms of good equality and diversity practices. For example, since The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry of 1999 there has been a development and broadening acceptance of how structures, procedural systems and normative cultural

assumptions within an organisation, when not regularly questioned and reviewed, can become prejudicial against certain groups and individuals.

Central publishes this document as part of the ethos of a positive and welcoming attitude to Equality and Diversity.

#### **4 The Equality Act**

Central's Single Equality Scheme is underpinned by The Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act 2010 currently indicates that institutions must focus their Equality and Diversity Policies around nine Protected Characteristics. Protected Characteristics are the grounds upon which, generally, discrimination is unlawful. The Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Appendix B provides brief descriptions of the Protected Characteristics, including further information on legislation.

#### **5 Principles of the Single Equality Scheme**

The principles of Central's Single Equality Scheme are:

- to maintain a high level of good practice in relation to all Equality and Diversity matters;
- to be proactive in gathering feedback from diverse groups within Central by seeking consultation with stakeholders, especially those who identify with the Protected Characteristics, whilst generating policy and procedures;
- to take feedback seriously and act upon it;
- to promote knowledge about Equality and Diversity to encourage positive relations in Central's culture;
- to promote the use of Equality Impact Assessments as part of the normal procedure of policy generation;
- to be aware of the industries in which Central operates and promote/implement measures of good equality and diversity practices.

## **6 Equality and Diversity Themes**

As Central's Single Equality Scheme brings together all existing Equality and Diversity Policies there will be greater coherence across the different Equality and Diversity strands. This coherence will allow Central to identify any emergent themes and be able to react more fluidly to the demands/nature of each theme - such themes might not be noticed if each policy remained separate.

As previously mentioned, the Single Equality Scheme will identify a range of Equality and Diversity themes that will become the focus of Central's business on an annual basis. Each theme will last one academic year and will be subject to change on a year by year basis.

The themes will direct Equality and Diversity related practices in a way that is able to respond to changes in legislation; changes in the Higher Education landscape; changes in the culture of Central and changes in the communities with whom we work.

The themes may change as and when appropriate as the context in which Central operates also changes. The themes will be developed through consultation with the Central community via the Equality and Diversity Committee.

## **8 Reviewing, Monitoring, Engaging and Consulting.**

Primarily, the Single Equality Scheme will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Equality and Diversity Committee. However, there is an expectation that Central's community will also review the effectiveness of the Scheme by taking part in feedback mechanisms such as annual monitoring, the National Student Survey and groups specifically convened to reflect and feedback on Equality and Diversity matters (such as focus groups, forums for specific groups, use of anonymous feedback systems etc).

Central will maintain, monitor and extend its commitment to Equality and Diversity by reviewing what it does regularly, consulting with people from a range of diverse backgrounds who are part of the Central community, enhancing and sharing good practice.

The impact that consulting and engaging with people has on what we do at Central, will be reported through the Equality & Diversity Newsletter and annually in our Annual Review of this Scheme.

If a student has cause to make a formal complaint that relates to an issue of equality, diversity, discrimination on the basis of their age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, transgender status, status relating to marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, that complaint will

be dealt with as part of the School's Complaints Procedures. Similarly, if a member of staff makes a complaint or takes out a grievance relating to those same things, the issue will be dealt with through the appropriate employee relations procedure.

## Appendix A: Our duties under the Equality Duty

To meet the ambitions of the equality duty, Higher Education Institutions need to demonstrate due regard throughout their functions. Higher education institutions (HEIs), in the **exercise of their functions**, must have **due regard** to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups - this involves considering the need to:
  - remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
  - meet the needs of people with protected characteristics;
  - encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low;
- foster good relations between people from different groups - this involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups.

**Due regard** comprises two linked elements, proportionality and relevance. ECU recommends that to demonstrate due regard as employers, education and service providers, institutions consider the **relevance** of the three aims of the equality duty when:

- developing, evaluating and reviewing policies (including, for example, those relating to recruitment and selection);
- designing, delivering and evaluating services, including education provisions;
- commissioning and procuring services from others.

To consider **proportionality**, HEIs should determine:

- the relevance of the policy to protected groups;
- the relevance of the policy to the public sector equality duty;
- any concern previously raised about policy or practice;
- any information indicating an adverse impact on a protected group.

To support this HEIs can develop mechanisms to help identify where a policy or practice:

- is likely to result in discrimination against a protected group;
- needs development to ensure that it adequately caters for the requirements of different protected groups;
- positively contributes to the participation of underrepresented groups.

## Appendix B: Protected Characteristics explained

The following are the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. For more in-depth definitions see the [Office of Public Sector Information website](#) or the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- sex
- sexual orientation
- socio-economic status\*

Central's Statements on Equality relate to each of these Protected Characteristics by name, with the exception of the Statement on Transgender Equality (which relates to Gender Reassignment).

\* Socio-economic status is not a listed Protected Characteristic in the Equality Act 2010, though it is a factor that Central considers when planning policy, process and practice.

### Age

Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds). The aim of the Single Equality Scheme is to prevent unfair treatment of staff and students due to their chronological age *unless* the treatment can be shown to be a proportionate way of achieving a legitimate aim. The Scheme also protects against discrimination on the grounds of an individual's apparent age.

### Disability

A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Current disability legislation is generally categorised into two types:

- that which gives individual staff, students and visitors to an institution the right not to be discriminated against or harassed, and therefore requiring institutions to develop policies to prevent such situations arising;
- more positively framed legislation that does not give new rights to individual disabled people, but places more proactive duties upon institutions and other public bodies, such as the duty to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

A wide range of written materials is produced for students, including course handbooks and lecture notes. Careful consideration needs to be taken to ensure written documents are accessible to the full student body - both to ensure an inclusive environment and to meet the requirements of disability legislation.

Current disability equality legislation, allows for disabled people to be more favourably treated than a non-disabled person. As such it remains lawful to make reasonable adjustments in relation to employment, education and services to ensure true equality of opportunity for disabled people. Further information about this can be found in the [Disability Discrimination Act \(DDA\) 2005](#).

### **Gender reassignment**

Gender reassignment is the process of transitioning from one gender to another. It is unlawful to treat a person less favourably on the grounds that s/he intends to undergo gender reassignment, or is undergoing gender reassignment, or has at some time in the past undergone gender reassignment. A person who has undergone gender reassignment has the right to live as if they had always been of the chosen gender. In particular, computer systems must always reflect the current gender, and records held about the person should be audited to ensure they reflect the current gender.

Any unwarranted or unwelcome comment or discussion about a person's appearance or altering appearance could constitute direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment. We will endeavour to ensure there is adequate training and information available to all staff and students about the reasons for, and process of, gender reassignment, so that a supportive and non-prejudicial environment can exist. The person concerned should feel that Central provides an environment within which they can be open about their intentions and procedures.

### **Marriage and civil partnership**

Although there is no statutory definition identifying what 'marriage' is, the 1949 Marriage Act governs inter alia how marriage can be solemnised, as well as certain age, kindred and affinity restrictions. In 2013, Parliament passed the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act which introduced civil marriage as an institutional status for same-sex couples in England and Wales who have undergone such a ceremony. Marriage

therefore no longer solely applies to a 'union between a man and a woman'. The 2013 legislation enabled civil partners to convert their civil partnership into marriage and transsexual people to change their legal gender without necessarily having to end their existing marriage. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 which came into effect on December 5th 2005 gave same-sex couples the right to legally register their relationships as 'civil partnerships'.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant. Maternity refers to the period of 26 weeks after the birth, which reflects the period of a woman's ordinary maternity leave entitlement in the employment context.

### **Race**

The protected characteristic of Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

### **Religion and belief**

Religion or belief is defined as any religion, religious belief, or philosophical belief or absence thereof.

Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition. It does not include a political belief. Care must be taken to distinguish between a political belief and a philosophical belief akin to a religion. The legislation does not require that a belief is held by more than one person, and allows personal interpretation of religious edicts, etc. The legislation also allows an individual's faith and practice to alter over time.

### **Sex**

This protected characteristic is about a person's sex e.g. male, female, intersex. Legislation is about avoiding discrimination based on a person's sex.

### **Sexual orientation**

The sexual orientation regulations prohibit direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation relates to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

### **Socio-economic status**

This is not a Protected Characteristic within the Equality Act 2010, but at Central, we are interested in looking at ways to begin monitoring, and therefore understanding the impact of socio-economic status on the experiences of students and staff

