

## **Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education**

### **Draft Codes of Good Practice for Students: Cultural Diversity Project 04**

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#### **Why we need this?**

- 1.1 As most people are aware Northern Ireland is a society in flux. Cultural diversity that exists in our society is changing from being two dimensional to being multifaceted. As a reflection of society as a whole, Belfast Institute is committed to reflecting this growing trend in our society by ensuring fairness and respect for difference are placed at the heart of the institutes policy and practice so that the Institute remains an inclusive environment for learning and teaching.
- 1.2 Section 75 (1) Northern Ireland Act 1998 states that a public authority shall in carrying out its functions have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally and between persons with a disability and persons without.
- 1.3 Furthermore the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 places legal obligations on public authorities and bodies such as Belfast Institute to positively promote equality within the institute. In light of this and Section 75 Belfast Institute is obliged to implement policies, training/induction and codes of good practice for staff and students on Cultural Diversity Issues to ensure that these legal and social requirements are met in full.
- 1.4 This means that students, as part of the public body that is Belfast Institute, have a responsibility to actively maintain and promote a culturally diverse Institute by respecting diversity and difference, challenging racism whether overt or covert wherever it occurs, promoting culturally inclusive events and inclusiveness in the day to day life of the institute.

## **Direct and Indirect Discrimination: Definitions**

- 2.1 Direct Discrimination: Means treating one person less favourably than another is, has been, or would be in a comparable situation on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.
- 2.2 Indirect Discrimination: occurs when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons having a particular sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.
- 2.3 Victimisation: occurs when a person discriminates against another if person A treats person B less favourably than he/she treats or would treat other persons in the same circumstances and does so by reason that person B has brought proceedings or has made a complaint formal or otherwise under the Race Relations Order. This also can occur if person A suspects that B intends to make a complaint of this nature and therefore discriminates against B
- 2.4 Belfast Institute recognises that discrimination can exist and that no organisation is immune to it. It is committed to the provision of a supportive learning environment, which demonstrates respect and tolerance for difference, and where every individual is supported in order to achieve their full potential. Belfast Institute will take offences of direct/indirect discrimination and/or harassment seriously and deal with complaints of this nature sensitively.
- 2.5 Belfast Institute will seek to eliminate discrimination where it exists, but also to create a working and learning environment based on positive relations between members of different racial groups. To this end the Institute undertakes to provide training and support for staff and students. The Institute will also provide diverse images and references in published and teaching materials for students and staff. The aim of this is to provide an environment where issues of racism stereotyping can be discussed openly with a shared commitment to challenging and preventing racism and discrimination and to respect and value diversity and difference. Belfast Institute hopes by implementing these practices and procedures that good relations between different groups will be promoted.

## Multicultural Students at Belfast Institute

The following outline will give a breakdown of ethnic minority students according to: Number, gender, age, full-time or part-time courses, department and site of study.

3.1 According to current statistics the majority ethnic groups within Belfast Institute are: Afro Caribbean (19), African (55), Indian (48), Pakistani (21), Chinese (185), Irish Traveller (24), Mixed other (66), and Other (146).<sup>1</sup>

3.2 The following table represents the breakdown of the above ethnic minorities according to gender:

<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>Afro Caribbean</b>	<b>African</b>	<b>Indian</b>	<b>Pakistani</b>	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Irish Traveller</b>	<b>Mixed Other</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Male</b>	10	30	22	12	67	8	21	56
<b>Female</b>	9	25	26	9	118	16	45	90

As can be seen from the above table, Chinese learners both male and female make up the majority ethnic minority with Other, Mixed other and African learners following this. This has implications for the students union as they must ensure that clubs and societies are organised along culturally diverse lines as well as having policies and procedures that ensure that respect for diversity and difference are at the heart of student life at Belfast Institute.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers in brackets indicate the actual numbers of students

## Student Responsibilities

Sometimes standing up against racism, and discriminatory behaviour can be a difficult process as often you are isolating yourself against the majority. This can even include your friends and classmates. However this is an issue that needs to be addressed as everyone deserves to study in an environment free from racism, sectarianism and discriminatory behaviour in order to reach their full potential. Below are some responsibilities that you as a student at Belfast Institute have in order to facilitate this environment.

- Assist the institute in creating and maintaining a learning environment free from racism & sectarianism. Students should behave in manner that should not be offensive to other students, staff or the general public
- Adhere to policies which help ensure a learning environment free from racism and sectarianism.
- Challenge racist/sectarian remarks or behaviour among your fellow students
- Challenge discrimination by staff and outside contractors.
- Report incidents of racism or sectarianism to your student union representative or a senior member of staff.
- Support fellow students who are being harassed.
- Fully participate in any training/induction programmes that Belfast Institute runs in relation to Cultural Diversity training
- Create forums within the student's union where issues can be addressed or resolved in an informal manner.
- Strive to include students of all backgrounds in your day to day social and academic life.
- Where you come across ethnic minority students in the day to day life of the Institute students should learn the correct pronunciation of the students name and should NOT shorten, anglicise or give a nickname to that student unless given permission to by that student.
- Majority ethnic students SHOULD respect the cultural practices and traditions of minority ethnic students, this includes the type of food eaten, important cultural festivals and the wearing of culturally or religiously significant clothing by students at the Institute.
- Be patient with international students who are having difficulty communicating through English and try to assist them where possible.
- If organising student activities or events make sure that the event is culturally inclusive and not specifically for one group of students.<sup>2</sup>
- Finally; respond to your fellow students needs. Respect the fact that we are all individuals and all unique.

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<sup>2</sup> Guidelines for culturally inclusive social events will follow in the next section

## **Guidelines for Culturally Inclusive Social Events**

A Culturally Diverse Institute is one where students and staff aim for culturally inclusive behaviour and activities, where differences are valued and explored, where students and staff actively seek to learn from other cultures.

Social events are a key part of student life at the Institute and it is the responsibility of all departments and the Students Union to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate for all students.

The aims of designing culturally inclusive social events are to:

1. Increase students' awareness of the importance of attending social events (to develop contacts, make friends, and enhance communication skills)
2. Make social events accessible and appropriate for all students

The following principles should be applied to planning for all social events at the institute:

- No person or groups are inappropriately excluded.
- People from culturally diverse backgrounds are treated with equal respect.
- Decisions about venue and catering consider the needs of students from culturally diverse groups.
- Advertising is culturally sensitive

The following is a checklist that should be followed when organising social events in Belfast Institute:

### **Advertising:**

- Stress the importance of attending social events by emphasising the skills to be gained and the opportunities provided.
- Emphasise that non-alcoholic drinks will be provided, appropriate food will be served and that the function is open to all students.
- Include where possible student representatives from a variety of different cultural background in planning, organising and marketing the event.
- Use multi-lingual posters to ensure that all students understand that they are welcome and that their religious beliefs will be respected.

## **Alcohol**

- Become familiar with the Institutes policy on the serving and consumption of alcohol at student events.
- Ensure that non-alcoholic options are available and make this clear in advertising.
- In addition to soft drinks such as juice, water, fizzy drinks, try considering other alternatives such as herbal teas

## **Food:**

- Ensure that vegetarian/vegan foods are prepared away from meat products and are served separately.
- Provide separate serving utensils from each dish.
- Label food correctly and highlight ingredients for allergy and cultural purposes.
- Ensure the needs of students with food or other allergies will be met

## **Venue:**

- Choose a venue which is comfortable for all students
- Check your venue for wheelchair access and availability of wheelchair accessible toilets.
- Choose a venue with fire exits and visible fire extinguishers.
- If students who are hearing impaired will be attending, check if a sign language interpreter is required and organise as appropriate

## Use of Inclusive Language

As most people are aware language can be a major vehicle for the expression of prejudice or discrimination. In Northern Ireland the unacceptable terms 'prod' or 'taig' can be used to refer to a person or persons of differing religious or political belief. Most people in Northern Ireland would hold the view that the use of these terms has no place in a tolerant society. So too is other terminology that refers to people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. For example, the terms '*coloured*', *chink*, *jingly*', *packi*' are as unacceptable as '*prod* or *taig*' and also have no place in a diverse tolerant environment.

However sometimes people can be unconsciously discriminatory, stereotypical, derogatory or patronising to various diverse groups of people. As language both reflects and shapes society<sup>3</sup> staff and students of Belfast Institute in order to create a culturally diverse and tolerant environment must pay attention to the language that they use.

Here is a glossary that may be helpful

**Diversity:** All the ways in which people differ, for example, different styles of working, thinking and communicating with others arising from differences in social background, culture, education gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. Embracing diversity values the full range of skills, knowledge and life experience of individuals with different values, attitudes cultural perspectives and religious beliefs.

**Equality of opportunity:**

The state of being equal, especially in status, rights and opportunity. The absence or removal of barriers.

**Ghettoisation**

The term 'ghettoisation' refers to the clustering of ethnic minority students in certain geographic or vocational areas of the Institute for example, ESOL or Community Outreach in a way that confirms stereotypical assumptions about what minority ethnic students do best.

**Harassment**

Harassment involves threatening, intrusive or undermining behaviour towards a person of a particular racial or ethnic group or gender, It is usually, though not always intentional and on-going. It includes persistent name calling, bullying or ridicule and acts of psychological, verbal or physical abuse. It is a form of direct discrimination which violates a persons dignity and creates a hostile environment

**Institutional racism**

Is defined as 'the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin and is seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which

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<sup>3</sup> *A guide to inclusive language*: University of Tasmania (13/9/040)

amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson)

### **Racism**

Racism describes a complex set of attitudes and behaviour towards people from another racial or minority ethnic group resulting from long standing historical relationships. It is most commonly based on:

- The belief that physical or cultural differences correspond directly with differences in personality, intelligence or ability, leading to assumptions about racial superiority or inferiority.
- The social and economic power of members of one racial or ethnic group to promote or enforce such attitudes.
- Racism can be described as overt and covert words and actions which advantage/disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin

### **Stereotyping**

Stereotyping is the act of labelling or categorising particular groups, usually in a negative way, because of pre-conceived ideas. It relies on broad generalisations, often popularly held, that all members of a particular racial or ethnic group will behave identically.

### **Structural racism**

Structural racism describes discrimination that is endemic within wider society. For instance within education, employment, housing and the criminal justice system. It goes beyond individual organisations, referring to the way racism pervades culture and institutions of society as a whole.

#### **1.1 Ethnic minority groups:**

Ethnic group can be described in an objective sense as people who share a particular national origin, religion, language or culture. It is useful to link these objective factors with a subjective identification. The term 'ethnic group' can be misleading because in essence everyone belongs to an ethnic group not just those who are of non Anglo-Celtic origins. Ethnic is the adjective pertaining to ethnicity and should not be used as a noun.

Immigrant means a person who takes up residence in a country other than his/her birthplace. The term migrant refers to a person who moves from one place to another. Migrant sometimes is used in place of immigrant whereas immigrant is the preferred and more accurate term.

People of non-English speaking background refer to people who have:

- Migrated to Northern Ireland and whose first language is one other than English.
- Who were born in Northern Ireland or other parts of the UK but one or both parents' first language was not English.

A considerable amount of language use in the UK can stereotype ethnic and cultural minorities or make them invisible. For example our society now consists of many people holding religious beliefs other than Christian. Therefore it is inappropriate to request a person's 'Christian name' when we are seeking identification. Asking for someone's first name is also inappropriate for the naming practices of many Asian people. It is preferable to request surname, or family name rather than last name, and given name rather than first name.

## 1.2 Useful tips

It is not appropriate to make references to race, culture or religion if they are irrelevant to the context of what is being written or said. Gratuitous descriptions are those which identify the difference and convey the impression that the persons referred to are different or unusual. E.g. Asian student, Muslim lecturer etc.

Recognise and acknowledge the diversity within and between various racial and ethnic groups. For example avoid using the term *African* to describe persons of a particular racial type as there are several racial, cultural and ethnic differences within the geographic boundaries of Africa.

The term 'Northern Irish' can be used in an inclusive manner to refer to people who are either from either background. The term can also be used to refer to a permanent resident of this country irrespective of ethnic or racial background.

Avoid portraying stereotypic notions of particular racial, national, ethnic or cultural groups in the use of language as they are offensive. Stereotypes present a fixed and often inaccurate image of persons belonging to a particular group. For instance: *Asian students are diligent and hardworking, Muslim males have problems with women in leadership*. Be aware that members of racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be described in stereotypical terms than those of the majority group.

*Avoid: Asylum Seeker, economic migrant, refugee,*  
Use: Immigrant, Northern Irish

*Avoid: Ethnic student/staff*  
Use: Ethnic minority student/staff

*Avoid: Coloured, African, Black student/staff*  
Use: Student/staff from ... (country, if relevant in context) Northern Irish

*Avoid: Indian, Pakistani, Asian, Hindi, Islamic student/staff*  
Use: Student from... (country, if relevant in context) Northern Irish

*Avoid: Asian, Buddhist, Islamic student/staff*  
Use: Staff/student from... (country, if relevant in context) E.g.  
Staff/Student from China/Korea/Japan

**Avoid jokes or humour with racial or sectarian overtones as they are offensive to many people.**

**Taboo terms: Note these should never be used in any context and can constitute racial/sectarian harassment if used. Harassment in any form is a serious disciplinary offence and may result in termination of contract or expulsion.**

*Northern Ireland: Orange, Green, 'Prod' 'Taig' etc.*

*African/Afro-Caribbean origin: Coloured, Wog, Nigger etc.*

*Chinese/Korean/Japanese/Filipino/Tibetan origin: Chink, Gook etc.*

*Indian/Pakistani/Malay/Bangladeshi origin: Jingly, Paki, Towel wearer etc.*

*Gays and Lesbians: Poofter, Pansy, Dyke, Fag etc.*

*Persons with disability; Spastic, Moron, Stumpy, Retarded, Cripple etc.*

### 1.3 Language and Gender

Language can be often used to reinforce the perceived superior position of one gender over another. Historically this bias has been reflected in favour of men and discriminatory against women. Any language that discriminates against either men or women can be regarded as sexist.

#### **Useful tips**

Be aware of language that renders women invisible through the generic use of the masculine pronouns 'he' 'him' 'his' to refer to both men and women.

Do not convey images of women being subordinate to men through the use of suffixes or qualifiers that imply women are unusual in the situation.

E.g. *Air hostess* = Flight attendant

*Female electrician* = Electrician

*Woman Academic* = Academic

Avoid portraying women in a stereotypic manner, based on traditional roles or physical attributes, when it isn't appropriate in the context. Descriptions such as 'beautiful female lecturer' are irrelevant and demeaning.

Avoid: Man (generic) *Mankind, manpower*

Use: Person, Man & Woman, Human resources, personnel, the staff, Humanity, artificial, handmade, the human race.

Avoid: *Mr John Smith and Mary Brown*

Use: Mr John Smith and Ms Mary Brown

*Avoid: Girls in the office*

Use: Office staff

*Avoid: Female lecturer; Grounds man; Cleaning lady*

Use: Lecturer; Ground staff; Cleaner

*Avoid: It is important to offer women flexible working hours to assist in meeting family responsibilities.*

Use: It is important to offer staff flexible working hours to assist in meeting family responsibilities

#### **6.4: Language and Disability**

The use of language around disability has been characterised by attitudes in this area. People with disabilities have been described albeit unintentionally, as people that are regarded as heroic, require sympathy or need extra assistance. This is demeaning and makes people who are disabled lives & achievements into a spectacle. Discriminatory language around people with disabilities occurs primarily when the disability in question is associated with certain stereotypes

##### **Some useful tips:**

Focus on the ability of the person when referring to people with disabilities. This recognises that they are multi-dimensional and their disability is merely one characteristic.

Use images that portray people in a positive light and try to include images of non-visible disability such as hearing impaired. This widens the scope of traditional images of people with disability just being in wheelchairs etc.

Do not use collective terminology and labels to describe disability and people with disability. People with disabilities are often referred to as a category of people and this can be depersonalising and offensive as it denies individuality and describes the individual along a single dimension i.e. disability.

*Avoid: The disabled*

Use: People with a disability, staff/students with disabilities

*Avoid: The deaf, the blind.*

Use: Persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, people with a hearing impairment, people who are blind or visually impaired.

*Avoid: Spastic; paraplegic; epileptic*

Use: A person with cerebral palsy; person with paraplegia; person with epilepsy

*Avoid: AIDS sufferer or victim of AIDS*

Use: Persons who are HIV positive or a person living with HIV/AIDS

*Avoid: Wheelchair bound; Cripple*

Use: A wheelchair user or a person who uses a wheelchair: Person with a mobility impairment.

*Avoid: Crazy; Loopy; Mental; Schitzo*

Use: Person with a psychological or psychiatric impairment

*Avoid: Mongol/Mongoloid; Retarded, slow learner*

Use: Person with Down's Syndrome; Person with a learning disability<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from *Using Inclusive Language* University of Western Australia