



Position Statement: Age Equality

**Prepared by the Age Equality Task Group
on behalf of the Equality & Diversity Committee**

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1. Introduction

This document is a statement about the value that Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) places on equality and diversity relating to age. It is not a policy document but an attempt to articulate the core values that underlie our approach to age in the University, an outline of existing good practice and suggestions for further development. The document is the result of a piece of work commissioned by the Equality & Diversity Committee and conducted by a task group comprising representatives from a range of academic and support departments from across the University (see appendix).

Age is rarely experienced as purely advantageous or disadvantageous but is part of a more complex picture. The interaction between age, gender, economic status and/or other factors is often the cause of disadvantage. It is an important component of the equality and diversity agenda because age-related discrimination is often masked by other value-laden judgments about, for example, credibility, energy and experience. Age is less well understood than race, gender and disability as a cause of discrimination and, until recently, the lack of case law regarding inequalities due to age has meant that many stereotypes about older and younger people have gone unchallenged.

2. Background

Legislation relating to Age:

In response to the European Employment Directive (2000/78/EC) which established a general framework for equal treatment in employment and vocational training, the government has introduced regulations to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of age. The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 came into force on 1st October 2006.

As with other equality legislation, the regulations prohibit both direct and indirect discrimination in employment and vocational training. At the moment, they do not extend to other areas such as the provision of goods and services. The upper age limits for unfair dismissal and redundancy have been removed giving older workers the same rights to claim unfair dismissal or receive a redundancy payment as younger workers, unless there is a genuine retirement.

The law introduced a national default retirement age of 65 making compulsory retirement below the age of 65 unlawful without justification. All employees have the right to request to work beyond the retirement age of 65 or any other retirement age set by the employer, and employers have a duty to consider such requests. The law further requires employers to inform employees in writing, and at least 6 months in advance, of their intended retirement date. This allows people to plan for their retirement.

The Equalities Policy Context:

The legal framework for race, disability and gender have enabled a proactive approach to eliminating discrimination and promoting inclusion through the development of statutory Race, Gender and Disability Equality Schemes. The regulatory requirements relating to age, religion and belief and sexual orientation do not place the same proactive responsibilities on the University. However this differential is likely to be addressed within the current discrimination law review and in future legislation. Within this context the University is likely to move towards a single Equality and Diversity Scheme.

The University's Equal Opportunities Policy and the Equality and Diversity Strategy are inclusive of age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. The University's evolving Equality Impact Assessment process is comprehensive in its consideration of all of the existing recognised equality strands. Actions already planned within the University's Race Equality Policy, Gender Equality Scheme and Disability Equality Scheme can be extended to embrace age, sexual orientation and religion and belief.

3. The University's Commitment:

Informed by the Joint Agreement on Guidance for Age Equality in Further Education¹, the University is committed to the following principles:

- 3.1 The University celebrates a culture of diversity and is committed to equality of treatment for all staff and students. It will practise equality in the operation and implementation of all its policies. The University will treat all staff and students with respect and dignity, and seek to provide a positive environment free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the grounds of age.
- 3.2 The University recognises the valuable contributions made by staff and students of all ages, in terms of qualities of experiences brought to learning, teaching, support services, research, consultancy, administration and management. It advocates adult and lifelong learning and expects to benefit from employing workers of all ages at all levels of responsibility and across all areas of work.
- 3.3 The University will work in partnership with recognised unions to combat age discrimination and ensure equality irrespective of age. It will ensure that its equality policies are comprehensive and include age discrimination.

¹ Joint Agreement on Guidance for Age Equality in Further Education¹ The University and College Union, Unison, Transport and General Workers' Union, Association of Colleges, Association for College Management, Association of Teachers and Lecturers, GMB, September 2006

3.4 The University will work towards the elimination of prejudice and discrimination, whether direct or indirect, and will seek to ensure that all staff and students have equal access to the full range of University facilities, regardless of their age.

3.5 As well as respecting the specific needs of staff and students throughout the age spectrum, the University will seek to fulfil its duty of care to all staff and students, irrespective of age.

The University has established an Equality and Diversity Delivery Group with effect from the beginning of the academic year 2007/8. This group will be responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the institution's Equality and Diversity Strategy, including the recommendations made by the Age Task Group in this paper.

4. Measures in place to support age equality: Staff

CCCU is already taking proactive steps to develop an inclusive approach to age at a strategic and operational level. These include:

- Recent negotiations for the new pay framework included extensive discussions with staff and unions to ensure equity for all staff.
- Substantial action has been taken by the Human Resources Department to ensure compliance with the age discrimination legislation within recruitment and selection and employment practice. (e.g. by monitoring age data in relation to these processes).
- Recruitment and selection training raises awareness of potential age discrimination issues (for example discouraging experience based criteria based on length of service rather than quality of experience).
- There are some very positive examples in the university of the employment of older people including staff who have retired from the NHS and want to work part-time. These have been invaluable members of staff bringing with them a wealth of experience.
- The University expects staff will retire at 65. It has developed procedures for staff to apply to work beyond that age.
- The University's Dignity at Work Policy includes measures to address potential harassment on the grounds of age.
- The Staff Development Policy has given and will continue to give careful consideration to equality and diversity issues including age.
- The formation of the Age Task Group and its activities reflect the University's commitment to age equality in its staff and student bodies.

- The University offers advice and guidance on retirement and related issues to staff

5. Further Required Actions: Staff

The University offers employment across a very broad range of occupational roles. As with other areas of equality (in particular gender) it has an ongoing responsibility to review and evaluate age demographics within occupational groups and to monitor the ages at which staff are appointed to occupational groups or salary grades, are promoted into occupational groups or salary grades and seek retirement from or request extensions to retirement in occupational groups. Opportunities exist for positive action to encourage potential or existing staff to challenge age related occupational stereotyping and encourage wider age diversity in all occupational groups.

In monitoring trends it is important to take into account factors such as the high percentage of vocational and professional courses at CCCU compared to other HEIs, which may impact on the average age of some groups of teaching staff (if staff are required to have undergone training and/or have practical experience before entering academia).

The following steps should be taken to ensure age equality amongst staff:

- Monitor by age and by starting point on the salary scale in order to identify trends. Apply further analysis to take into account previous employment and field of expertise.
- Introduce a mechanism to monitor age issues in relation to promotion/access to training.
- Monitor the newly introduced contribution element of the pay framework to evaluate any age related impact.
- The University should follow guidance from the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Equality Challenge Unit in relation to promoting age equality.
- Requests for delayed retirement and their outcomes should be monitored to evaluate when people retire and whether the diversity of requests reflects occupational or grade groups.
- Awareness raising of age-related rights and responsibilities should be conducted amongst staff.
- Marketing and recruitment strategies should take account of the fact that CCCU can benefit from employing older and sometimes retired

people and that these will have different ambitions in terms of their career.

6. Measures in place to support age equality: Students

CCCU has already taken many steps, strategically and operationally, to adopt an inclusive approach to age. These include:

- The University is aware that there are increasing numbers of under 18 year old students as part of the student population. The University has an established Under-18's Policy which is regularly updated. In addition, the University has reviewed its admission arrangements in light of the age regulations, resulting in amendments which have been approved by Academic Board.
- The work of the Lifelong Learners Working Party (2005-2007) which has drawn together good practice regarding older learners across the institution. Its outcomes were listed in the article in the Academy Exchange Magazine (Summer, 2007) Lifelong Learning Edition.
- Significantly increased access opportunities for students of all ages have been realised within the context of the Widening Participation Strategy, the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit and the work of National Teaching Fellow, Elizabeth Hoult.
- Provision of specific support events for older learners including orientation activities. These have been very successful, in particular with older learners and non-traditional students, but there is not yet any research in place to examine how it has affected students in the longer term.
- The University has created web pages to support younger and older learners, including learners' parents and partners.
- The University has new arrangements in place to support care leavers, including a nominated support officer.
- There is now a Student Retention Support Officer and a project is being designed to develop life skills to support students of all ages.
- The St George's Fitness Centre offers "Active for Life" classes, targeting older students.
- University guidance on the giving of references aims to ensure that there is no age-related discrimination and, for example, references are vetted for words such as "mature".

- Student Financial Services: the government criteria applies to Access to Learning Funding and priority groups are people aged 25+ and young parents.
- There are plans for all University services to collect and monitor age-related data.
- Student support sessions are run both on Wednesday afternoons and Thursday evenings, to suit different age groups and circumstances.

7. Further Required Actions: Students

HESA data shows a good diversity in age range amongst students at CCCU, in comparison with other HEIs, although there are very few older students (55+) amongst the undergraduate population. In 2006/07, 26% of students were between 18 and 20, 15% between 21 and 24, 12% between 25 and 29, and 47% 30 and above.

The high numbers of students in their 20's, 30's and above may reflect the high percentage (49.8%) of part-time students and also the number of students engaged in professional training, in comparison with other HEIs.

The drop in birth rate which is currently leading to a decreasing school population means that it is crucial for CCCU to be in a position to attract a wide range of learners in order to maintain and develop student numbers into the future.

The following steps should be taken to ensure age equality amongst students:

- Mechanisms should be developed to engage the Student Union in Equality and Diversity issues, in particular in relation to age equality.
- Attention should be given to the way CCCU markets itself, as current promotional materials do not usually contain images reflecting age diversity.
- Investigate whether the balance between print-based and electronic marketing materials encourages age diversity.
- Attempt to encourage those staff with specific academic expertise relating to age and the workplace and age and learning to inform good working practices and institutional developments.
- It is known at a national level that a disproportionately high number of complaints are made by older students. In view of this CCCU should attempt to monitor the relationship between age and grievance.

8. Further Sources of Information:

Employers Forum on Age (EFA)

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

Appendix

Equality and Diversity Age Task Group: Terms of Reference

1. Develop a position statement (for approval by the Equality and Diversity Committee and the Governing Body) in the form of 'Information for staff and students' of our commitment to valuing people of different ages, giving prominence to positive action already in place.
2. Make recommendations for further action (for approval by the Equality and Diversity Committee and the Governing Body) to ensure that the University meets its statutory obligations in respect of its statutory obligations to prevent age discrimination in employment and the provision of Higher Education.

NB The potential new regulations relating to goods and services will, if passed, have an impact on the work of the group in the future and it is important that this document allows for the future inclusion of an understanding of new legislation relating to goods and services when this becomes available.

Discussions have taken place within the context of:

Mission and values of the University
The Church of England Foundation
University's Strategic Plan 2006-10
University's Equality and Diversity Strategy 2006-10
Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Membership

Chair: Director of Regional Academic Development (Elizabeth Hoult)
Faculty representative: Health and Social Care
Faculty representative: Education
Faculty representative: Business and Sciences
Faculty representative: Arts and Humanities
Salomons
Student Services
Equality and Diversity Manager
Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit
Admissions
Human Resources
University Solicitor
Student Union (Mature Students' Officer)