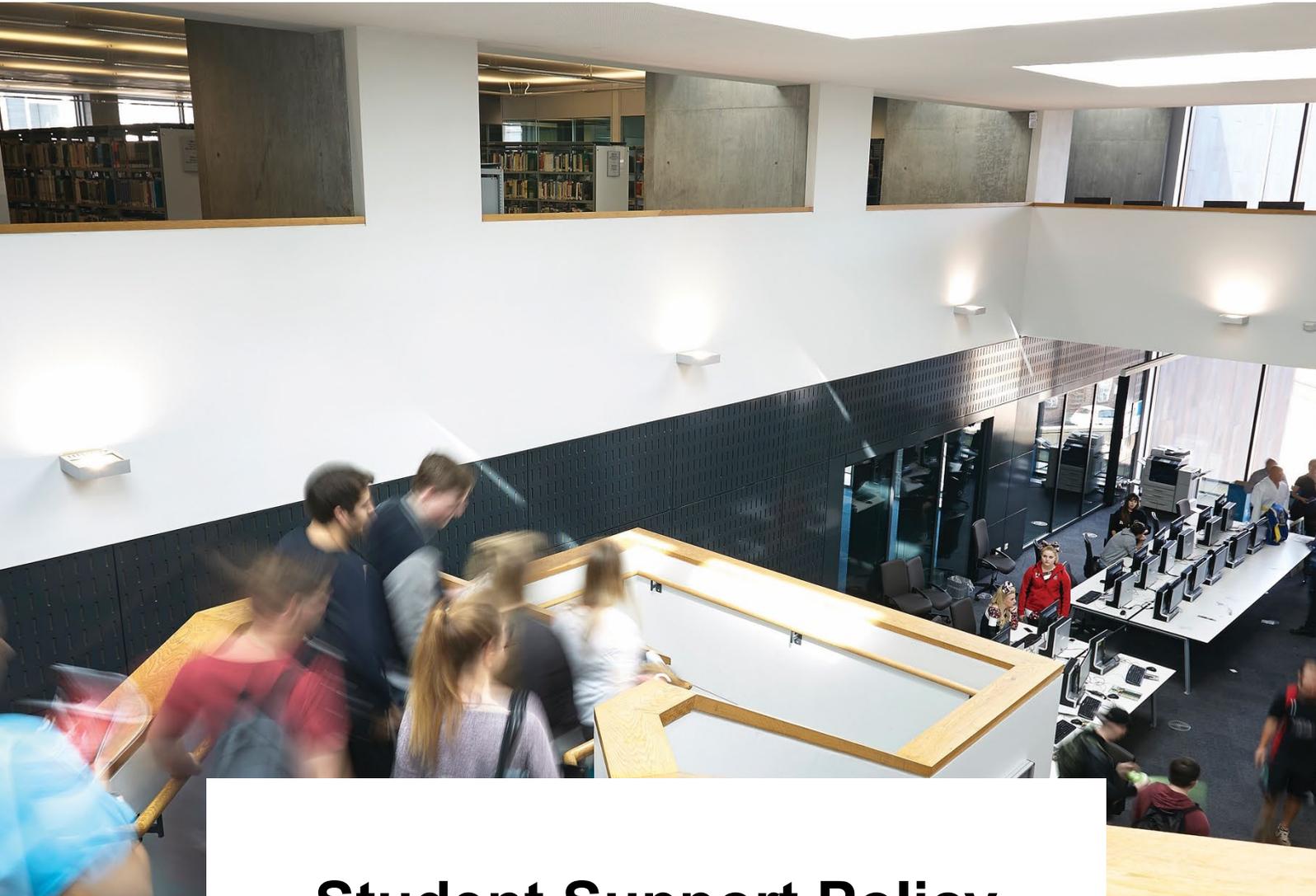




BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



# Student Support Policy



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Committee

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## Purpose and Scope

- 1 This Student Support Policy sets out Buckinghamshire New University's (BNU) commitment to providing a compassionate, inclusive, and legally compliant framework for supporting all students. It outlines the University's approach to student wellbeing, academic engagement, and personal development, and serves as an umbrella for a range of support services and procedures.
- 2 The policy provides a foundation for how BNU supports students through both proactive and responsive measures, including academic adjustments, wellbeing interventions, and structured procedures for managing complex or exceptional circumstances. It ensures that support is accessible, equitable, and aligned with legal obligations and sector good practice.
- 3 This policy applies to all students enrolled at BNU and is supported by a suite of procedures that address specific areas of student need, including academic appeals, exceptional circumstances, reasonable adjustments, wellbeing, conduct, and inclusion.

## Policy Statement

- 4 BNU is a progressive, widening participation institution committed to fostering a fully inclusive, compassionate, and student-centred learning environment. We recognise that students come from diverse backgrounds and bring with them a range of experiences, strengths, and challenges. Our approach to student support is grounded in equity, dignity, and a shared responsibility to help every student thrive.
- 5 We are committed to:
  - Creating a learning environment that is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to individual needs.
  - Supporting students through every stage of their academic journey with empathy, flexibility, and respect.
  - Providing early, compassionate interventions to address challenges before they escalate.
  - Promoting a whole-institution approach to student support, where all staff contribute to student wellbeing and success.
  - Ensuring that all student-facing procedures and communications are written in clear, inclusive, and student-friendly language.
  - Listening actively, responding empathetically, and acting supportively in all interactions.
  - Upholding transparency and accountability in our processes and decision-making.
  - Recognising and responding to the complex, intersectional identities of our students.
  - Co-creating solutions with students, respecting their autonomy and lived experiences.

- Continuously improving our support through feedback, reflection, and alignment with sector best practice.
- 6 This policy reflects our legal and ethical obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and our commitment to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework. It underpins all student support procedures and services at BNU.

## **Legal and Regulatory Framework**

- 7 This policy is informed by:
- The Equality Act 2010
  - The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework
  - Relevant sector guidance and best practice

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

- 8 We are committed to enhancing EDI across all aspects of student support. We acknowledge that while all individuals have protected characteristics, some communities face systemic barriers in higher education. These include, but are not limited to:
- Ethnic minorities (including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers)
  - Disabled and neurodiverse individuals
  - Pregnant students and those impacted by maternity/paternity
  - LGBTQ+ individuals
  - Carers and those impacted by menopause
  - People of different faiths
  - Individuals from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds
  - Survivors of domestic/sexual violence
  - Care leavers, looked-after children, and ex-armed forces personnel
- 9 We also recognise the importance of intersectionality and the need for tailored support that reflects the complexity of students' identities and experiences.

## **Access and Communication**

- 10 BNU is committed to ensuring that all students can easily access the support they need. Information about student support services and procedures will be made available in accessible formats and through multiple channels, including the Student Hub, University website, induction materials, and academic handbooks. Staff will be trained to signpost students effectively, and students will be supported to navigate services and understand their rights and responsibilities.

## Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 11 All student support interactions will be managed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information shared by students will be treated confidentially and only disclosed to relevant staff or external agencies on a need-to-know basis. Wherever possible, disclosures will be made with the student's informed consent. The University is committed to maintaining trust and safeguarding student privacy.

## Support Services and Procedures

- 12 BNU provides a comprehensive network of student support services and procedures designed to promote wellbeing, academic success, and personal development. These services work collaboratively to ensure that students receive timely, appropriate, and inclusive support throughout their time at the University.
- 13 However, while the University is committed to providing a compassionate and inclusive support environment, it is important to recognise that the University is not an emergency service or a substitute for statutory health, mental health, or social care provision. There are limits to the support we can offer, and in some cases—particularly where needs are complex, ongoing, or fall outside the University's remit—we may need to refer students to appropriate external services. We will always aim to do this sensitively and in partnership with the student, ensuring they are supported throughout the process.

### Support Services

- 14 The following services are available to all students:
- **Student Hub** – Acts as a central point of contact for student enquiries and access to services.
  - **Disability and Inclusion Team** – Provides advice, reasonable adjustments, and ongoing support for disabled and neurodiverse students.
  - **Counselling Service** – Offers confidential support for emotional wellbeing and mental health.
  - **Student Engagement and Retention Team** – Monitors attendance and engagement to provide proactive outreach and support.
  - **Multi-faith Chaplaincy** – Offers spiritual care and a welcoming space for students of all faiths and none.
  - **Accommodation Office** – Supports students with university-managed and private housing needs.
  - **Careers and Employability Team** – Provides guidance on career planning, placements, and employability skills.
  - **Student Learning Advice Team** – Offers academic skills support, including writing, referencing, and time management.

- **Safeguarding Team** - Responsible for protecting students from harm, abuse or neglect by promoting a safe and supportive environment and responding to any concerns appropriately.
- **Student Resolution Team** – Manages the Student Complaints Procedure and Student Code of Conduct, supporting fair and transparent resolution of student concerns.

### Independent Student Support

- 15 Provided by Bucks Students' Union, the **Students' Union Advice Centre** is an independent service offering free, confidential advice on academic issue, housing, finance and student rights. It operates separately from the University to ensure impartiality and advocacy for students.

### Support Procedures

- 16 These procedures provide structured ways to access support, respond to challenges, and ensure fair treatment throughout your time at BNU:
- **Academic Appeals Procedure** – If you believe there has been an error or unfairness in the way your academic results were decided, this procedure allows you to formally request a review of that decision.
  - **Disclosing Criminal Convictions Procedure** – If you have a criminal conviction or receive one during your studies, this procedure explains how to disclose it and what support is available to help you continue your education safely and responsibly.
  - **Drug and Alcohol Policy** – This policy sets out the University's approach to substance use, promoting safety, wellbeing, and access to support if you're affected by drug or alcohol misuse.
  - **Exceptional Circumstances Procedure** – If something unexpected (like illness or a personal crisis) affects your ability to complete assessments, this procedure helps you request extensions or alternative arrangements.
  - **Fitness to Practise Procedure** – If you're on a course leading to professional registration and concerns are raised about your conduct, health, or behaviour, this procedure ensures a fair process to assess whether you meet the standards required for your profession.
  - **Interruption, Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure** – If you're thinking about taking a break from your course, leaving the University, or transferring to another programme, this helps you understand your options and make informed decisions.
  - **Maternity Policy (Students)** – If you're pregnant, on maternity/paternity leave, or returning to study, this policy sets out the support available to help you continue your studies.
  - **Prevent Policy** – This explains how BNU meets its legal duty to safeguard students from radicalisation, while promoting open discussion and respectful engagement.
  - **Reasonable Adjustments Procedure** – If you have a disability, long-term health condition, or specific learning difference, this ensures you get the support and adjustments you need to access your studies fairly.

- **Safeguarding Policy and Procedure**– This sets out how BNU protects the wellbeing of all students and staff, and what to do if you're worried about your own or someone else's safety.
- **Social Media Policy** – This policy guides you in using social media in a way that supports your personal and professional development while protecting yourself and others online.
- **Student Code of Conduct** – This outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all students and explains what happens if those standards are not met.
- **Student Complaints Procedure** – If you're unhappy with any aspect of your experience at BNU, this procedure explains how to raise a concern and what steps will be taken to resolve it.
- **Support to Study Procedure** – If your health, wellbeing, or behaviour is affecting your ability to study or engage safely, this procedure offers a supportive way to explore options and agree on a plan.
- **Transgender Policy** – This policy ensures that transgender and non-binary students are treated with respect and supported throughout their time at BNU, including during any transition process.

A non-exhaustive list of issues that may impact students and the recommended intervention is appended at the end of this policy. This table can be used to:

- Inform staff decision-making and referrals
- Support training and awareness of inclusive practice
- Identify any gaps in policy coverage

## Crisis and Emergency Support

- 17 In circumstances where a student is at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, or where urgent intervention is required, the University will respond promptly and appropriately. This may include contacting emergency services, activating safeguarding protocols, or facilitating access to crisis mental health support. Students will be supported throughout and following any emergency response, with clear communication and appropriate follow-up care.

## Student Voice and Co-Production

- 18 BNU values the lived experience of its students and is committed to embedding the student voice in the design, delivery, and evaluation of support services. Students will be engaged through structured feedback mechanisms, representation on relevant committees, and opportunities for co-production. This collaborative approach ensures that support services are inclusive, relevant, and student-informed.

## Staff Training and Responsibilities

- 19 All staff at BNU share a collective responsibility to support student wellbeing, engagement, and success. The University is committed to ensuring that staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to fulfil this responsibility through appropriate training and guidance.

### Core Responsibilities:

- 20 All staff are expected to contribute to a supportive and inclusive learning environment.
- 21 Staff should be able to recognise when a student may be in difficulty and know how to respond appropriately or refer to specialist services.
- 22 Staff must uphold the principles of confidentiality, respect, and fairness in all student interactions.
- 23 Academic and professional services staff are expected to engage with relevant procedures (e.g. Exceptional Circumstances, Reasonable Adjustments) in a timely and informed manner.

### Training and Development

- 24 To support these responsibilities, BNU will provide a programme of training and development opportunities, including:
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** – Understanding the Equality Act 2010, inclusive practice, and the lived experiences of underrepresented groups.
  - **Compassionate Communication** – Training in trauma-informed approaches, active listening, and empathetic engagement.
  - **Mental Health Awareness** – Recognising signs of distress and knowing how to respond appropriately, and refer students to specialist services.
  - **Reasonable Adjustments and Disability Awareness** – Understanding legal obligations and best practices for supporting disabled and neurodiverse students.
  - **Safeguarding and Duty of Care** – Ensuring staff understand their responsibilities in protecting students from harm and promoting wellbeing.
  - **Support to Study and Crisis Response** – Guidance on how to support students whose health or behaviour may impact their ability to study or engage safely.
- 25 Staff in key services (e.g. Disability and Inclusion, Counselling, Student Engagement) will receive additional, role-specific training, including:
- Cultural competency
  - LGBTQ+ inclusion
  - Supporting care-experienced and estranged students
  - Responding to disclosures of domestic or sexual violence

### **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

- 26 BNU will maintain a rolling programme of CPD to ensure staff remain informed, confident, and capable in their roles. This includes:
- Annual refresher training
  - Online modules and microcredentials
  - Guest speakers and workshops
- 27 Staff employed in (such as counselling, disability support, safeguarding, and wellbeing) are expected to maintain the currency of their professional knowledge by engaging in relevant external training, attending sector events, and participating in professional networks. This ensures that practice remains aligned with current legislation, sector standards, and the evolving needs of our student community.

### **Evaluation and Feedback**

- 28 Training effectiveness will be reviewed annually through:
- Staff feedback
  - Student outcomes and satisfaction
  - Alignment with sector best practice and regulatory expectations

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 29 This policy and its associated procedures will be reviewed annually by the relevant University committees, in consultation with student representatives and service leads. Evaluation will be informed by student feedback, service usage data, and alignment with sector benchmarks and regulatory expectations. The University is committed to continuous improvement and to ensuring that its support provision remains inclusive, effective, and responsive to student needs.

## Appendix: Table of Issues and Recommended Interventions

### Disclaimer

The timeframes and categories listed in this table (e.g. short-term, medium-term, long-term) are intended as general guidance only. Individual circumstances may vary significantly, and the duration or complexity of an issue may shift over time. For example, a short-term concern may develop into a medium- or long-term need depending on the student's situation and the support required. Staff are encouraged to use professional judgment and consult relevant services when determining appropriate interventions.

| <b>Timeframe</b>  | <b>Type of Issue</b>                     | <b>Impact on Protected Characteristics</b> | <b>Recommended Intervention</b>          | <b>Relevant University Procedure or Service</b>                  |
|-------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Short-term</b> | Acute illness or personal crisis         | May affect any characteristic              | Extension or alternative arrangements    | Exceptional Circumstances Procedure                              |
| <b>Short-term</b> | Bereavement                              | May affect any characteristic              | Bereavement support and extensions       | Exceptional Circumstances Procedure, Counselling Service         |
| <b>Short-term</b> | Domestic abuse                           | May affect any characteristic              | Safeguarding and counselling             | Safeguarding Procedure   |
| <b>Short-term</b> | Family crisis                            | May affect any characteristic              | Extension or alternative arrangements    | Exceptional Circumstances Procedure                              |
| <b>Short-term</b> | Harassment or Sexual Misconduct          | May affect any characteristic              | Report to Resolution / Safeguarding Team | Student Code of Conduct / Report and Support - Safeguarding Team |
| <b>Short-term</b> | Immediate academic difficulty            | May affect any characteristic              | Academic support and tutoring            | Student Learning Advice Team                                     |
| <b>Short-term</b> | Social media misuse or online harassment | May affect any characteristic              | Digital conduct guidance or safeguarding | Social Media Policy / Student Code of Conduct                    |

| <b>Timeframe</b>   | <b>Type of Issue</b>                          | <b>Impact on Protected Characteristics</b> | <b>Recommended Intervention</b>                       | <b>Relevant University Procedure or Service</b>  |
|--------------------|---|--|---|--|
|                    |   |  |   | / Safeguarding Policy and Procedure  |
| <b>Short-term</b>  | Substance misuse (drugs or alcohol)           | May affect any characteristic              | Referral to support services or safeguarding          | Drug and Alcohol Policy / Support to Study Procedure / Safeguarding Policy and Procedure |
| <b>Short-term</b>  | Technical issues during online exams          | May affect any characteristic              | Technical support and rescheduling                    | Exceptional Circumstances Procedure, Technical Support                                   |
| <b>Short-term</b>  | Temporary mental health episode               | Mental health                              | Counselling and mental health support                 | Counselling Service  |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Complaints about university services or staff | May affect any characteristic              | Formal complaint process                              | Student Complaints Procedure   |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Considering a break from studies              | May affect any characteristic              | Guidance on interruption options and support planning | Interruption, Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure  |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Consistent academic underperformance          | May affect any characteristic              | Academic mentoring and support                        | Support to Study Procedure   |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Criminal conviction disclosed or received     | May affect any characteristic              | Risk assessment and support planning                  | Disclosing Criminal Convictions Procedure  |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Disability                                    | Disability                                 | Reasonable adjustments                                | Reasonable Adjustments Procedure   |

| <b>Timeframe</b>   | <b>Type of Issue</b>                     | <b>Impact on Protected Characteristics</b> | <b>Recommended Intervention</b>                                       | <b>Relevant University Procedure or Service</b>                               |
|--------------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Gender transitioning                     | Gender identity                            | Support and flexible arrangements; possible interruption if requested | Transgender Policy / Interruption, Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure          |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Mental health treatment                  | Mental health                              | Counselling and mental health support                                 | Counselling Service   |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Ongoing health condition                 | Disability, neurodiversity                 | Reasonable adjustments  | Reasonable Adjustments Procedure  |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Pregnancy or maternity                   | Pregnancy, maternity                       | Flexible study arrangements; possible interruption or parental leave  | Maternity Policy (Students) / Interruption, Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Professional conduct concerns            | May affect any characteristic              | Formal review and support plan  | Fitness to Practise Procedure   |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Radicalisation concerns                  | May affect any characteristic              | Safeguarding referral and Prevent support                             | Prevent policy / Safeguarding Policy and Procedure                            |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Recovery from surgery                    | Disability                                 | Reasonable adjustments and support                                    | Reasonable Adjustments Procedure  |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Student misconduct or behavioural issues | May affect any characteristic              | Investigation and disciplinary process                                | Student Code of Conduct   |
| <b>Medium-term</b> | Thinking about leaving or transferring   | May affect any characteristic              | Academic and wellbeing advice to support decision-making              | Interruption, Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure                               |
| <b>Long-term</b>   | Chronic health condition                 | Disability, neurodiversity                 | Long-term reasonable adjustments: interruption                        | Reasonable Adjustments Procedure / Interruption,                              |

| <b>Timeframe</b> | <b>Type of Issue</b>              | <b>Impact on Protected Characteristics</b> | <b>Recommended Intervention</b>   | <b>Relevant University Procedure or Service</b>                              |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
|                  |                                   |  | or withdrawal if study is not feasible  | Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure  |
| <b>Long-term</b> | Chronic illness                   | Disability                                 | Long-term reasonable adjustments  | Reasonable Adjustments Procedure   |
| <b>Long-term</b> | Long-term academic disengagement  | May affect any characteristic              | Support to study and engagement plan; interruption or withdrawal if no improvement        | Support to Study Procedure / Interruption, Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure |
| <b>Long-term</b> | Long-term disability              | Disability                                 | Long-term reasonable adjustments  | Reasonable Adjustments Procedure   |
| <b>Long-term</b> | Long-term mental health condition | Mental health                              | Long-term mental health support; interruption or withdrawal if engagement is not possible | Support to Study Procedure / Interruption, Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure |
| <b>Long-term</b> | Ongoing domestic abuse            | May affect any characteristic              | Ongoing safeguarding and counselling; interruption if needed for safety                   | Safeguarding Procedure / Interruption, Withdrawal and Transfer Procedure     |
| <b>Long-term</b> | Ongoing gender transitioning      | Gender identity                            | Ongoing support and flexible arrangements   | Transgender Policy   |

## Appendix: Equality Impact Assessment

As a University, we are committed to enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We have a legal (Equality Act 2010) and ethical obligation to ensure our policies, systems and processes are fair, inclusive and ensure every member of the BNU community can thrive.

Whilst we all have protected characteristics, we know there are certain characteristics and communities that are marginalised and underrepresented in Higher Education and the workplace. These are: different ethnicities (including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) Disabled individuals; neurodiverse individuals; pregnancy (including maternity and paternity impact); the LGBT+ community; carers; people of different faiths; people impacted by menopause and individuals from a range of backgrounds including: socio-economic disadvantage, homeless, alcohol and/or substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers. We also know individuals have multiple intersectional experiences and different points in their lives and careers.

### 1. *With reference to the above characteristics, in what ways does this policy enhance equality and the access of opportunity at BNU?*

The policy enhances equality and access to opportunity in several key ways:

- **Inclusive Framework:** It explicitly commits to a compassionate, inclusive, and legally compliant approach to student support, ensuring all students—regardless of background—can access the help they need.
- **Recognition of Marginalised Groups:** The policy acknowledges systemic barriers faced by specific groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, disabled and neurodiverse individuals, LGBTQ+ students, care leavers, etc.) and commits to tailored, intersectional support.
- **Accessible Communication:** Information is made available in multiple formats and platforms, ensuring students with different needs and abilities can access it.
- **Comprehensive Services:** A wide range of support services (e.g. counselling, disability support, safeguarding, academic advice) are available to all students, with clear referral pathways.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** The policy ensures that students with disabilities or long-term conditions receive appropriate academic and wellbeing adjustments.
- **Student Voice and Co-Production:** Students are actively involved in shaping support services, ensuring they reflect lived experiences and diverse needs.
- **Staff Training:** Staff receive training in EDI, mental health awareness, and safeguarding, promoting a culture of understanding and responsiveness.

### 2. *In what ways does the policy adversely impact individuals from marginalised and underrepresented communities?*

While the policy is broadly inclusive, potential adverse impacts could include:

- **Limits of University Support:** The policy acknowledges that BNU is not a substitute for statutory services. Students with complex or long-term needs (e.g. mental health,

domestic abuse, homelessness) may face delays or gaps in support if external services are overstretched or inaccessible.

- **Disclosure Barriers:** Some students (e.g. those with criminal convictions, undocumented migrants, or survivors of abuse) may be reluctant to disclose sensitive information due to fear of stigma or repercussions, even with confidentiality assurances.
- **Digital Divide:** Reliance on online platforms for communication and support may disadvantage students with limited digital access or skills.
- **Implementation Variability:** The effectiveness of support may vary depending on staff awareness, training uptake, or departmental culture, potentially leading to inconsistent experiences for students.

3. *How does this proposal work towards achieving the BNU Equality Objectives as outlined in the [Equality Strategy 2023-2028](#)? Please signpost objectives and actions in the BNU Equality Strategy.*

The policy aligns with and supports several key objectives from the Equality Strategy:

- **Objective 1: Inclusive Culture**
  - The policy promotes a whole-institution approach to inclusion, embedding EDI in student support and staff responsibilities.
  - Actions: Staff training in EDI, compassionate communication, and safeguarding.
- **Objective 2: Reducing Attainment Gaps**
  - By offering tailored academic and wellbeing support (e.g. Reasonable Adjustments, Support to Study), the policy helps address barriers that contribute to differential outcomes.
  - Actions: Monitoring student engagement and providing proactive outreach.
- **Objective 3: Inclusive Curriculum and Experience**
  - The policy ensures that support services are co-produced with students and reflect diverse lived experiences.
  - Actions: Embedding student voice in service design and evaluation.
- **Objective 4: Data-Informed Decision Making**
  - The policy includes a commitment to annual review and evaluation using student feedback and service usage data.
  - Actions: Continuous improvement based on evidence and sector benchmarks.
- **Objective 5: Leadership and Accountability**
  - The policy outlines clear responsibilities for staff and service leads, ensuring accountability for inclusive practice.

Signed:

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Date: 9 July 2025



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