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## 1. Introduction



Whilst we pride ourselves on our challenging of orthodoxy, our student mix, and our reputation for scholarly enquiry, we know we must work hard to maintain and improve on our successes in equality, diversity and inclusion.

A recent report has shown that SOAS is the number one UK university for the ethnic diversity of our professors with almost a third being black and minority ethnic- four times the national average. Around 50% of our 5000 students on campus are international and our UK students come from varied walks of life. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths and gives us a unique perspective on the world. But we are not complacent.

We can and will do better, and I welcome this new strategy as a positive step. We have a duty to challenge persistent inequity and remove barriers so that students and staff can achieve their full potential and make the world a better place.



Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within SOAS and the wider community has been a long-held priority for the Students' Union.

We warmly welcome the renewed commitment to tackling discrimination, oppression and barriers to access that this new strategy represents. We hope that it will be embraced across the School and become embedded into practice from senior management to frontline services.

The rich diversity of the SOAS community is one of the defining features of our institution. However, this diversity does not mean that discrimination, harassment and inequalities do not exist and need to be challenged. Already we have made progress by working together to tackle gender-based violence among many other issues, but there is still much more to do. The Students' Union looks forward to engaging with this strategy and working with the School to achieve an equal and inclusive SOAS.

### **Tom King**

Student Union Co-President (Welfare and Campaigns)

## 2. Who we are

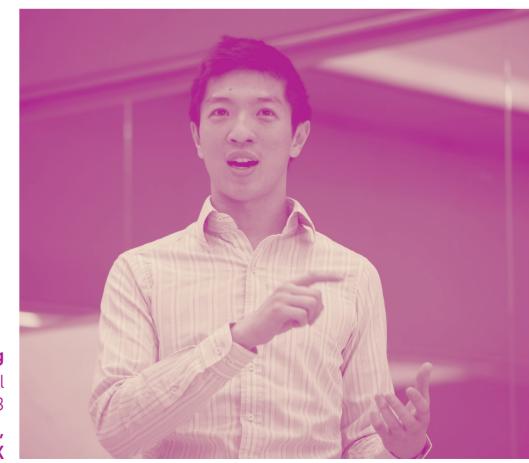
SOAS, University of London is synonymous with intellectual enquiry and achievement. It is a global academic base and a crucial resource for London.

We live in a world of shrinking borders and of economic and technological simultaneity. Yet it is also a world in which difference and regionalism present themselves acutely. It is a world that SOAS is distinctively positioned to analyse, understand and explain.

SOAS is a remarkable institution. Uniquely combining language scholarship, disciplinary expertise and regional focus, it has the largest concentration in Europe of academic staff concerned with Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

On the one hand, this means that SOAS scholars grapple with pressing issues - democracy, development, human rights, identity, legal systems, poverty, religion, social change - confronting two-thirds of humanity while at the same time remaining guardians of specialised knowledge in languages, periods and regions not available anywhere else in the UK.

Our academic focus on the languages, cultures and societies of Africa, Asia and the Middle East makes us an indispensable interpreter in a complex world.



MSc International Development, 2008 Founder and CEO, FoodCycle, UK 6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2016-2020) 100 years of diversity **7** 

# 3. The unique profile of our students and academic programme

## 133 Countries

SOAS has more than 5,000 students from over 133 countries on campus, and around 50% per cent are from outside the UK. In addition, about 3,600 students in over 140 countries around the world are taking one of our distance learning programmes.



## Languages

SOAS offers an unparalleled range of **non-European** languages, all of which may be studied without prior knowledge.

Ratio

our student-staff ratio

League Table, 2016) is one

(figure from The Times

of the best in the UK.

### **Mature Students**

28% of undergraduates are 10.9:1 over 21 when they start their course.



## National Leader

In the Research Excellence Framework of 2014, more than **95 per cent** of our submissions were ranked at either the **highest grade** of

- 4\* (world-leading quality).
- **3\*** (internationally excellent) or
- 2\* (recognised internationally).



**Satisfied** 

SOAS is above the national average for both student satisfaction and teaching. (National student survey 2015).



## **Equal Split**

There is a roughly equal split between undergraduates (51%) and postgraduates (49%).

### 350 Combinations

More than 350 undergraduate degree combinations are available in social sciences. arts, humanities and languages, all with a distinctive regional focus and global relevance.

## **Opportunity**

Almost half of our 200 + undergraduate degree programmes offer the opportunity to spend a year studying in another country.



## 300 Academics

SOAS has the largest concentration of specialist staff (300+ academics) concerned with the study of Africa, Asia and the Middle East at any university in the world.

## **Over 150 Postgraduate Programmes**

SOAS has over 150 postgraduate programmes taught on campus and a wide range of degrees, certificates and diplomas taught by distance learning. We cover social sciences, humanities and languages, with a distinctive regional focus and global relevance.

# 4. SOAS values

### Our Core Values

SOAS' core values underpin all our activities:

### Promoting equality and celebrating diversity

SOAS is above all else an intimate single community, one that celebrates diversity and is respectful and collegial. SOAS' diverse population is one of its greatest strengths. Equality of opportunity is at the core of all the School's activities.

### Freedom of speech and tolerance

SOAS is committed to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. This can only be conducted effectively in an atmosphere of open enquiry, mutual tolerance and intellectual freedom. In practice this means that we acknowledge the paramount importance of freedom of expression. However, freedom of expression may not be exercised to threaten the safety or freedom of expression of others.

### Promoting cultural understanding

SOAS is committed to fostering broad cultural understanding in the UK and in the world at large.

#### **Ethical standards**

SOAS will maintain the highest ethical standards in all of its dealings and foster the values of openness, honesty, tolerance, fairness and responsibility in all areas.

### **Excellence**

SOAS is committed to striving for excellence in all its activities.

### Community

SOAS recognises that its greatest assets are its staff and students. We will strive to create an atmosphere of community, collegiality and cooperation for all staff and students.

### **Evaluation and self-reflection**

SOAS believes that it must be honest with itself. We are committed to regular monitoring, evaluation and review of all our activities, procedures and processes.

### Transparency and accountability

It is important that decisions within SOAS are consistent, are made on the basis of the best available evidence and that good quality information is shared widely with an emphasis on transparency. We aspire to exemplary standards of governance in all that we do.

#### Environment

SOAS will actively seek to embed good environmental practice at an institutional level and will demonstrate a firm commitment to reducing energy consumption.

8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2016-2020) 100 years of diversity

# 5. Why we are committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our unique history has shown that diverse students and staff bring different perspectives, knowledge and culture. We know that this difference brings great benefits and makes SOAS an excellent place to work and study and it's why we are proud to say 'Meet the world at SOAS'.

Outside the School, society continues to be increasingly diverse, and this is reflected in higher education. And research shows that students and staff who are respected for their contributions; rather than judged on their personal characteristics, will perform better. Which means that actively embedding inclusive practices is of benefit to all Universities.

However, inequality remains evident in the Higher Education sector in the UK for both students and staff. Less than 4% of UK deputy/pro vice-chancellors and chief operating officers, registrars and university secretaries are Black and minority ethnic (BME), and only 85 of the UK's 18,000 professors are black; even though 1 in 5 students in the UK are now coming from BME backgrounds. There is a mean 'disability' pay gap of 6% across the sector and despite women being nearly half of all academics in UK universities, only 22% of women are in professorial roles with only a fifth of vice-chancellors are women.

The latest research from the Equality Challenge Unit shows that the degree attainment gap between BME students and their white counterparts has remained nearly static over the last ten years. In addition, more non-disabled students obtained a first or 2:1 than their disabled counterparts. And the significant gender gap in science based subjects remains, with only 15.8% of students being female in engineering and technology degrees.

At SOAS, we are proud that our performance in these areas is better than sector averages. An independent report in 2013 showed that SOAS was the number one UK university for the ethnic diversity of our professors, with almost a third of SOAS professors being black and minority ethnic (BME). In addition, almost half (42%) of our senior staff are women and around 50% of our students are international, giving us our unique perspective on the world.

Nevertheless, we accept that it is our responsibility to minimise any inequality in our performance as an institute of higher education and as an employer. We will do more, for example, to ensure better representation of women and BME staff at senior levels; we will continue in our efforts to reduce the attainment gap and to review our recruitment and staff development procedures. We understand that we can and must do more and we will achieve this by embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do.

# 6. Our strategic objectives for 2016-2020

To ensure progress in identified areas, we will prioritise the following key objectives in three main areas of our operation; - our student services, our role as an employer and our central functions:

### A. To recruit and teach diverse students we will:

- 1. Collect and analyse robust data on our current and future student body
- 2. Recruit and support students from the broadest pool
- 3. Identify and meet diverse student needs
- 4. Futher develop accessible and inclusive practices in our approach to teaching and research
- 5. Promote an inclusive curriculum

### B. To be an employer of choice we will:

- 6. Collect and analyse comprehensive workforce data
- 7. Ensure equal opportunity in the recruitment, development and reward of our staff
- 8. Embed inclusive workplace practices that value all employees
- 9. Develop and deliver diversity and inclusion training at all levels of the School
- 10. Benchmark our performance as an employer to continually improve our approach

### C. To embed inclusion in our central and professional services we will:

- 11. Adopt a strategic approach to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion
- 12. Use inclusive communications and marketing
- 13. Provide accessible buildings and facilities
- 14. Practice responsible procurement
- 15. Ensure that we continue to comply with our legislative obligations

In order to ensure that these key objectives are realised, we will monitor a detailed action plan that will specify targets, timescales and senior responsible staff. The actions will not be static – but will be updated annually to ensure they remain relevant. The comprehensive action plan will be reported to Equality and Diversity Committee on a termly basis and to the Board of Trustees annually.

# 7. Our approach to teaching

At SOAS, we recognise the significant impact that education can have on the life chances of young people. For this reason, we believe that a fair and inclusive academic approach is essential for individual students and for wider society.

We are determined to ensure that our approach to student recruitment is inclusive and attracts applications from the broadest pool. To this end, we monitor **student recruitment and admissions** to identify and address any barriers to particular groups or individuals. We encourage applications from a diverse range of potential students and, where appropriate, undertake initiatives to expand engagement from underrepresented groups.

The work of our Widening Participation
Team makes higher education accessible
to a diverse population with outreach
initiatives; bridging courses; and financial
support including bursaries, fee waivers
and scholarships to support students
from lower income backgrounds. We
also monitor and report on our Access
Agreement actions to ensure they are
effectively reducing any evident underrepresentation in our recruitment profile.

The services of our **Student Advice** and **Wellbeing Team** help all students to complete their course successfully through the specialist, professional services we offer: international student advice; welfare and financial advice, support for students with disabilities and student counselling.

Individual applicants are encouraged to discuss their particular requirements so that we can arrange **Learning Support Agreements** and identify and accommodate **reasonable adjustments** that will enable them to participate fully.

Providing an environment that is safe for all students will continue to be the highest priority, with such measures as our new **Guidance on Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence**. We are determined to be at the forefront of action to ensure everything possible can be done to prevent all forms of intimidation, harassment and assault on campus.

We also understand that working with the **Students Union** will help us to understand and address the issues that are important to those who choose to study with us. The Diversity Office liaises closely with Student Union representatives and meets with the **Studying @ SOAS** group in order to identify and embed inclusive practices.

However, we recognise that there are areas where the School can further embed our commitment to equality in our approach to teaching. Firstly, we understand that the diversity of our international **curriculum** is integral to our global reputation, so we will review the design and content of our courses to maintain this.

Where appropriate, we will build diverse materials into our curriculum, making the most of the cultural resources of our students and staff.

We will review our **teaching and timetabling** to give confidence
to all students that they can fully
participate and we will assess our **study** and **assessment methods**,
making informed changes to ensure
an inclusive approach. In this way
student needs of the will be reflected
in the pedagogy of each course.

We are also committed to promoting equality in **student retention** in order to deliver the best possible academic outcomes for all. So we will track and analyse data and agree actions to address the identified anomalies in this area. For example, we will review our facilities and support for students who are parents and carers and develop mentoring programmes to assist those who are less familiar with academic practices to achieve the best results. We will train personal tutors to ensure they can identify and support students in need of extra support.

We will review our approach to **research**, encouraging and supporting diversity in both staff and student research frameworks, targeting the recruitment of postgraduate research students from under-represented groups.

Finally, we appreciate that employment after graduation is a crucial outcome of the learning experience and we will monitor any significant differences between all groups of students of all backgrounds and academic levels. In this way we will be well placed to help students fulfil their potential and make the best career choices.

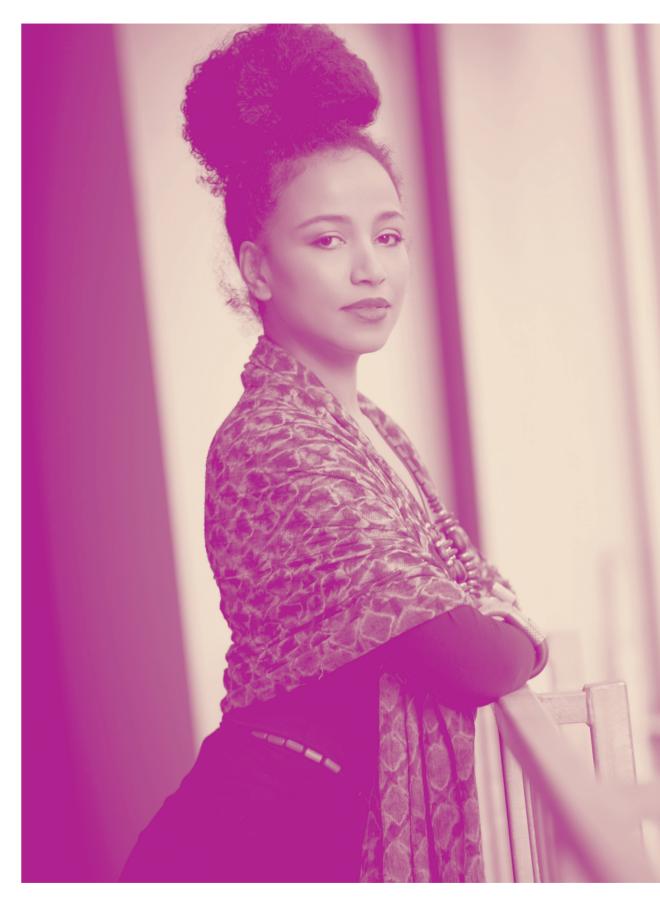
# Ezme's story



I grew up in South East London and life before SOAS was spent in low ranking, inner city schools. I was the first of my family to go to university and no one in my community or college expected me to get good grades, let alone any grades at all.

I came to SOAS angry at the world for not noticing me. Before university my living conditions were not great and nor was my mother's health. I was offered counselling at SOAS and the support was irreplaceable.

In second year my dyslexia was picked up by the Student Advice and Well-being Team. Not only did they arm me with the skills to own and invest in my learning difference but they gave me the chance to own my confidence again. SOAS offered me both emotional and practical support that has led to the success of my career today. My dyslexia made me question my ability to communicate, until Student Advice and Wellbeing taught me to utilise it for the better. I am now a communications consultant who teaches other companies how to communicate. Life has a funny way of turning out!



Minna Salami
MA Gender Studies, 2013
Award-winning Blogger and Writer, London/Lagos

# 8. Our role as an employer

At SOAS we are committed to being an employer of choice for all, recruiting and retaining the best employees from all sections of society.

We recognise that motivated staff who feel valued and respected for their contributions, rather than judged on their characteristics, will help us deliver the best teaching and support to our students.

In order to achieve this, senior colleagues in our Human Resources Team have successfully worked with staff union representatives on our **Model Equality** and Diversity Employer (MEDE) group to make progress on the following equality initiatives.

We collect comprehensive **employee data** and use relevant demographic comparators to identify any barriers in our internal procedures, such as recruitment and staff development. Our reporting includes progress on narrowing evident pay gaps and the recruitment of underrepresented groups to senior levels.

We have introduced mandatory equality and diversity training for all new staff and for managers involved in the recruitment process and have also promote unconscious bias training. These training sessions help to equip staff with the knowledge and skills to embed inclusive practices in their work and spheres of influence. We have also embedded Equality Impact Assessments into our employee policy reviews to ensure that there are no unintended barriers to any groups of staff.

Through our participation in the **Aurora** and **Leadership Matters** development

programmes, we have successfully encouraged female SOAS staff to develop their careers to a senior level. And our commitment is demonstrated by our membership and award of the expanded **Athena SWAN** charter in respect of gender equality in academic, professional and support roles.

That said, we recognise that there is progress to be made and will take further action to embed an inclusive and positive workforce culture that allows all our staff to fulfil their potential.

This will include a comprehensive review of our **recruitment practices** to ensure that there are no barriers to any specific groups or individuals at any stage of our internal practices. As part of this drive, we will consider new systems that will facilitate the monitoring of the recruitment process for **fractional teachers** and we will continue to require managers involved in the process to attend recruitment and selection training.

Recognising the importance of progress and transparency in this key area, we will continue to conduct regular reviews of our **pay and reward** framework and take renewed and concerted action to address gaps in respect of gender, race and disability.

We will also review employment practices that support staff including our provision of **reasonable adjustments** to ensure an inclusive working environment for all, and our policy on supporting employees with **parental or caring responsibilities**.

In addition, we will undertake analysis of academic and professional promotion taking care to consider the impact of complex factors such as intersectionality. The internal development of staff will be a priority to enhance diversity of workforce, so we will continue to promote our successful opportunities for professional development.

We will review our practices and assessment of research work to address the imbalances in take-up of **research opportunities** and will examine our record on the **retention** of staff in order to identify any improvements we can make to our performance as an equal opportunity employer, making use of exit surveys and feedback.

In addition to our successful management development programmes, we will also assess and refresh our equality, diversity and inclusion **training options** to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) and understand the benefits of a commitment to this agenda.

Lastly, we will continue to work with expert external agencies and embed actions towards appropriate **accreditation** that we can learn from and celebrate.



# Alison's story



When I started out in the world of work about twenty years ago I was extremely green. On paper I was a good catch, but I had zero insight into the ways of the world. So arriving on the Aurora programme at SOAS was a chance to consolidate the learning from across the decades and to recognise the progress I have made.

It was an opportunity to share, in a very open forum, the million small, throwaway beliefs and attitudes that can get in one's way. I had been labouring under the impression that my hang-ups and insecurities were entirely unique! It turns out I'm not nearly as special as I had thought. What a relief.

One powerful thing about the programme was the sheer array of role models. Absolutely lacking in my early life and career were people like me who were also leading teams, master-minding great work, visibly claiming their part in changing society. Another excellent aspect was the mentoring scheme. Having a sounding board to chuck my questions, dilemmas, frustrations and doubts at has been invaluable to my academic career.

# 9. Our professional and central services

At SOAS we also recognise that our professional and central support services have a critical role to play in embedding considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion into everything that we do.

In order to promote a strategic approach, SOAS resources the dedicated role of Diversity and Inclusion Manager, responsible for developing our strategic approach to inclusion and for monitoring progress against agreed targets. Over the last twelve months, the Diversity Office has developed and embedded a consolidated equality framework with a focus on achieving outcomes towards our organisational priorities.

In order to ensure further progress in our central and professional operations our Executive Board will demonstrate visible **leadership** on inclusive practices and ensure that responsible staff are aware of the importance of delivering against our agreed key objectives. Additionally, a consideration of equality impacts will be required in all decisions before formal committees and the Executive Board.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Managers will work closely with **senior staff** to benchmark our performance against the best performing institutions in the higher education sector, and disseminate learning as appropriate. We will consider establishing a network of **Inclusion Champions** with specialist knowledge in all faculties and departments to support the work of the Diversity and Inclusion Managers.

SOAS marketing and external **communications** will continue to convey our commitment to diversity with positive imagery that helps to attract students from all across the globe. We will adopt an inclusive approach to **estates** management, building in access audits as an integral part of our maintenance programme to ensure that we identify and address any barriers to students and staff.

Whilst we are committed to getting the best value for money in the **procurement** of our services, we recognise the positive impact we can have in how we buy our services. We will, therefore, build in considerations of equality impact into our procurement framework.

We will also continue to embed **Equality Impact Assessments** into our decisionmaking processes, to ensure that we identify and mitigate any adverse impact or unintended barriers to any individual or group defined as a Protected Characteristic by the Equality Act (2010).

Finally, we will ensure **legislative compliance** by delivering the initiatives set out above; publishing information demonstrating compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty; setting out our objectives in this strategy and by publishing our annual reports to the Equality and Diversity Committee.

# 10. Ensuring progress

Ensuring progress against our key objectives is vital, and we will do this by ensuring that all staff involved understand their roles and responsibilities:

Firstly, all SOAS staff and students have an opportunity to contribute to the School's approach to equality and inclusion by participating in the open Inclusion Forum where all issues can be raised and discussed, (see Appendix ii. Our EDI Framework). All members of the School's community should also understand that they are accountable for their own conduct and for challenging or reporting inappropriate behaviour if it occurs.

soAS managers have a responsibility to ensure that their line reports are aware of this Strategy and the School's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. They must also attend appropriate training to make sure that they are aware of their legal obligations within their areas of responsibility; particularly in managing and supporting diverse employees.

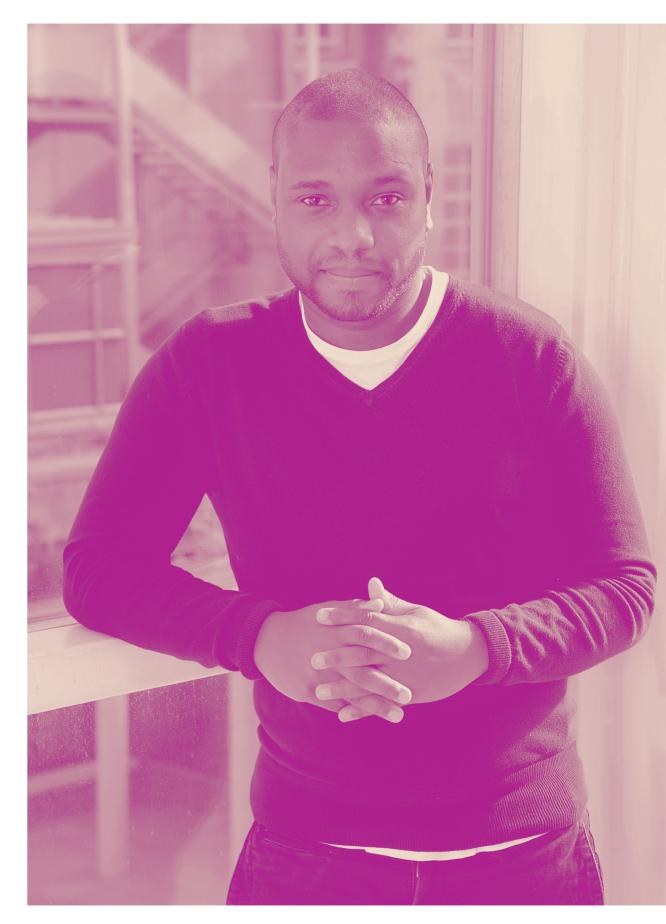
The **Diversity and Inclusion Managers** are responsible for consulting on and developing the strategic objectives and providing the Executive Board and the Equality and Diversity Committee with regular progress reports. They will also be responsible for publishing the statutory annual report each May.

**Faculty and departmental management teams** will be responsible for embedding objectives from this Strategy into their own annual plans, and monitoring their own progress against relevant actions. They will provide the Diversity and Inclusion Managers with regular updates on their performance.

The Equality and Diversity Committee sets the strategic priorities in this area and monitors progress against the objectives outlined in this Strategy.

The Director and the Executive Board are responsible for demonstrating leadership; agreeing the resources and managing the delivery of the objectives set out in this strategy. They are also responsible for ensuring that the School operates within the legal framework.

The Board of Trustees holds the Executive Board to account on organisational progress on equality diversity and inclusion and on compliance with legal obligations under the Equality Act (2010).



Adam Tulloch
BA History, 2015
Founder, Total Insight Theatre, London

20 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2016-2020) 100 years of diversity 21

# Appendices

### i). The Equality Act (2010)

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion does not derive from statutory requirements in this area. Nevertheless, as an Institute of Higher Education, we recognise that we must comply with the relevant legislation.

The Equality Act 2010 consolidated and streamlined previous anti-discrimination legislation. It introduced measures that have direct implications for colleges and higher education institutions. Protected characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The protected characteristics (section 4) under the Act are; age, disability, gender, reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation

Section 149 of The Act introduced the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** which came into force in April 2011. The duty requires institutions to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it

The first aim of the new duty covers all of the protected characteristics, the second and third aims cover all of the protected characteristics apart from marriage and civil partnership.

The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties, set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011. The specific duties require public bodies to:

- 1). Publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating compliance with the Equality Duty
- 2). Set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives
- 3). Publish relevant equality information in an accessible format

## ii). Our Equality Diversity and Inclusion Framework

The EDI framework at SOAS consists of four main working-groups:

This forum is open to all community members to raise issues for discussion. The meeting is facilitated by the Diversity Office to provide structure and to ensure that issues for action can be captured and then passed on to the appropriate forum.

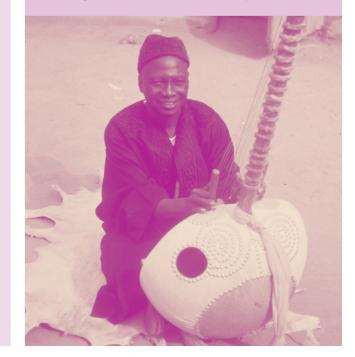
Both the Study @ SOAS and MEDE groups inform the Diversity Office reports to the termly Equality and Diversity Committee. The role of the Equality and Diversity Committee is set out in the SOAS Charter and Standing Orders. The formal Equality & Diversity Committee has the following terms of reference:

- (a) To consider strategic planning and policy development matters relating to equality and diversity, and to make recommendations to Academic Board, Resources & Planning Committee and other committees as appropriate;
- (b) To monitor the delivery of aspects of approved School strategy relating to equality and diversity, and to ensure that any additional monitoring required to enable the School to meet its legal obligations is carried out in a suitable and timely fashion.

This forum has a remit of progressing student and academic actions across the protected characteristics. Issues that may arise could include a focus on the accessibility of teaching materials and addressing the student

attainment gaps. It will also consider how to ensure SOAS complies with its legal obligations under the terms of the Equality Act (2010).

The MEDE group will continue the work of ensuring that SOAS becomes a model equality and diversity employer. This will include the ongoing work to win external accreditation and respond to staffing issues raised at the open forum.



# **Appendices**

## iii). Consultation on this Strategy

The Strategy was developed in consultation with the following groups and agencies who deserve our gratitude:

- The SOAS Board of Trustees
- Student Union representatives
- All SOAS staff members
- SOAS Trade Unions
- The SOAS Equality and Diversity Committee
- The Equality Challenge Unit

## iv). Complaints

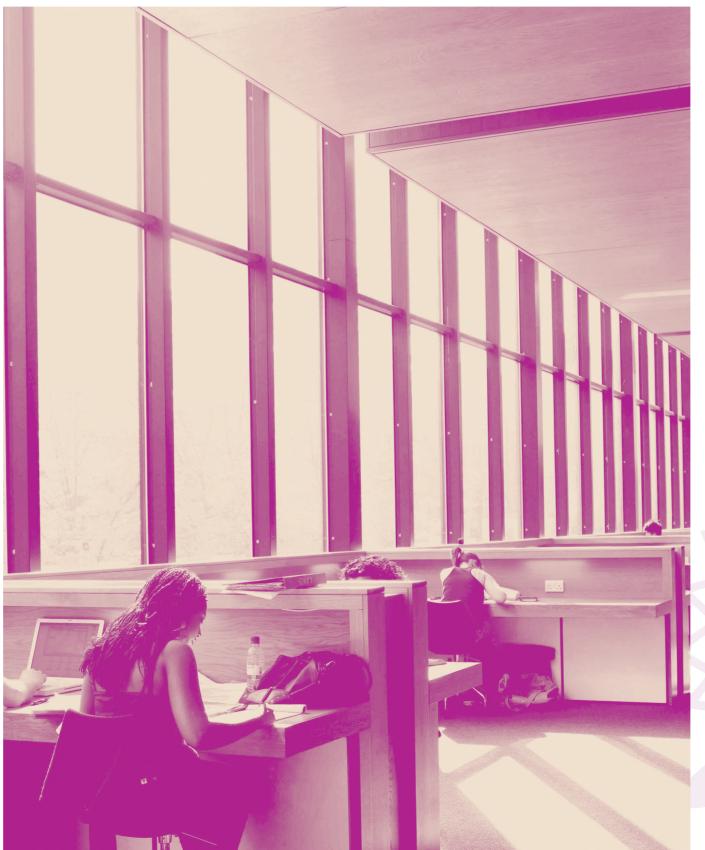
Anyone who considers they have been discriminated against or witnessed discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic has the following options:

### Students:

- Personal Tutor or Academic Advisor
- Diversity Office
- Anti-Harassment contact
- Respect at SOAS procedure
- Student Complaints procedure

### Staff:

- Line-Manager or HR representative
- Diversity Office
- Anti-Harassment contact
- Respect at SOAS procedure
- Grievance procedure



## v). Publication and review

This Strategy will be published and publically available on the SOAS website and available in alternative formats on request from: diversity@soas.ac.uk

This Scheme will be revisited in 2019, one year prior to the end of its term or unless a change in legislation necessitates an earlier review.

चगुः वैद्यः चर्-तेवाद्या

Tibetan

歡迎

Chinese (Trad.) / Japanese

환영합니다

Korean

أهلاً وسهلاً

Arabic

Merhaba

Turkish

خوش آمدید

Persian / Urdu

வாருங்கள்

Tamil

स्वागतम्

Hindi / Sanskrit

ยินดีต้อนรับ

Thai

Selamat datang

Malay / Indonesian

**ሔና ይስተልኝ** 

Amharic

Karibu

Swahili

## Global interactions

In a rapidly changing world, SOAS explores:

- international commodities
- transnational law, truth and reconciliation
- aid and development
- labour, travel and tourism
- Anthropology, Development Studies,
   Finance and Management, Law, Politics and International Relations, World Philosophies

If you require a copy of this document in alternative format, please contact: **Diversity@soas.ac.uk**