

## Equality and diversity in Dubai

The University of Birmingham has a long history of supporting equality, with the rights of women and men and people of all faiths to attend the University forming part of our founding Charter of Incorporation in 1900. Today, that revised Charter still underpins and informs our approach to equality and diversity:

‘The University promotes equal opportunities and shall exercise no discrimination on the grounds of political opinion, age, colour, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender\*, marital status, race, religion or sexual orientation in the admission of students, or the appointment or promotion of staff or the awarding of any Degree, Diploma or Certificate, or generally, in the execution of any of its Objects as laid down by the Charter.’

University of Birmingham, Charter of Incorporation, paragraph 12.

(\*Please note that the term ‘gender’ in the Charter denotes gender, gender identity, sex and pregnancy/maternity).

As the University increases its global presence through the development of overseas campuses, the challenge for the University is how these values translate in countries that have significant legal, social and cultural differences to the UK. In addressing this issue, our approach has been to find common ground between our strongly held belief in fairness and equality and the equally important need to ensure, as far as is possible, the safety of our staff and students. The ‘embassy’ approach to equality – as advocated by Stonewall - has been adopted by the University in response to this challenge.

### What do we mean by an ‘embassy approach’ to equality?

The embassy approach positions UoB’s commitment to equality - as stated in our Charter - as a global value that will inform all of our international operations. The embassy approach means that – whatever the legal, social and cultural norms of the operating country - we will provide a working and learning environment based on equality, dignity and respect for all, and will expect all members of our community to adhere to those values in their interactions with each other. If members of our community feel they are being treated unfairly on the grounds of any of the characteristics listed in the Charter, they will have recourse to the same grievance and complaints processes as they would in the UK.

The embassy approach also recognises that – due to legal, social and cultural differences - there are limits to the extent to which the University, its staff and students can safely be advocates for change within a society. For example, in a country where LGB relationships are outlawed, we would not as an institution participate in a Pride march, as we could in the UK, as this would place students and staff at risk. However, we will treat students and staff of all sexual orientations fairly, equally and with dignity and respect within our operation, in line with our Charter values.

### What does this mean in Dubai?

As stated above, the University is completely committed to treating its staff and students fairly and equally. We expect all members of our community to treat each other with dignity and respect in accordance with our Charter values. This is our approach to equality and diversity in our Dubai operation.

Staff considering working in Dubai do need to be aware that equality law in the UAE is significantly different to the UK, and that the University can only ensure fair treatment within the boundaries of our operation. It is up to applicants and staff to make an informed decision as to whether they wish to work in Dubai. The University provides resources to help make this decision (including this document), which can be accessed via the links at the bottom of this page.

Key points that you should be aware of in Dubai in relation to equality and diversity are:

- Equality law in Dubai is very limited and guarantees rights to UAE citizens only. The UAE Constitution states: 'All persons shall be equal before the law. No discrimination shall be practised between citizens of the Union by reason of race, nationality, religious belief or social position.' (UAE Constitution, Article 25).
- Sex outside of heterosexual marriage is illegal. The implications of this include:
  - Pregnant women accessing medical treatment may be asked for evidence that they are married. Treatment can be refused and/or the individual reported to the authorities if they are unmarried.
  - Displays of public affection between both same sex and opposite sex couples are not looked on favourably and can result in prosecution
  - Victims of sexual assault may be treated as law breakers
  - Same sex couple partnerships or marriages are not recognised in law

These examples are not intended to be exhaustive and staff are encouraged to make use of these resources to learn more about living and working in Dubai. Of course, in practice, many thousands of diverse individuals live, work and holiday in Dubai without any issues arising. It is for staff to make a balanced judgement of any risks that they feel they may face when considering working in Dubai. Staff will not face any detriment if they decide not to take up an opportunity to do so.

#### Other resources:

[Foreign Office travel advice for UAE](#)

[Stonewall Global Workforce Briefing - UAE](#)

[ECA International country profile - UAE](#)