Module 1: Introduction to Equality and Diversity

1.1 Intended Purpose of the Modules

The purpose of these modules is to support teachers registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, and other education professionals, in developing their understanding of equality and diversity. They encourage education professionals to critically reflect on their thinking and actions in relation to this and are also encouraged to consider how they might fulfil their responsibilities in this area through their teaching and wider professional activities.

The modules complement the Professional Guide which has been produced by the General Teaching Council for Scotland ‘Equality and Diversity: A Guide for Teaching Professionals’.

1.2 Overview of the Modules

This resource is formed of two modules. The first is a short introductory module. The second, longer module, takes a more in-depth look at what equality and diversity means for Scotland’s teachers, and encourages deeper learning about this topic. Both modules are intended to contribute to a teacher’s career-long professional learning and colleagues are encouraged to record and reflect on their learning as part of their ongoing recording of professional learning activities for Professional Review and Development, and Professional Update.

1.3 Self-care and Support for Teachers

Some of the activities in these modules require you to reflect on your own personal value systems. As you engage with the modules, you may find yourself realising that you hold some prejudices or stereotypes within long-established value systems, which are not in line with the values which you are required to demonstrate as a teacher registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, and so need to re-evaluate your personal value system. You may be a teacher with a protected characteristic, such as a disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity; or you may have multiple protected characteristics. In either case, you may find some of the material challenging as you are working your way through the various activities.

Teacher self-care and wellbeing is important to the General Teaching Council for Scotland. We have produced a series of wellbeing resources which you may find helpful. You can find them here [https://www.gtcs.org.uk/News/news/health-wellbeing.aspx](https://www.gtcs.org.uk/News/news/health-wellbeing.aspx). Your workplace mentor or line manager may also be able to support you and chat through issues that have arisen while you have been studying the module. You can also access support through most professional organisations and Local Authorities / employers, or through the Education Support helpline which has online
advice [https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you) and offers 24 hours per day, 365 days per year telephone support. Their phone number is 08000 562 561 or text on 07909 341229. For black and minority ethnic teachers, the Scottish Association for Minority Ethnic Educators (SAMEE) offers support [https://www.samee.org.uk/](https://www.samee.org.uk/) and you may wish to contact them.

For other specialised support, please see the Resources section towards the end of the module.

### 1.4 Module 1 Introduction

In this short introductory module, we firstly look at the General Teaching Council for Scotland Professional Standard for Teachers regarding Equality and Diversity, and what the requirements and expectations are of us as registered teachers. We then move on to look at the definitions of equality and diversity, and the United Kingdom Equality Act (2010). The recently published report Teaching in a Diverse Scotland (Scottish Government, 2018) will be discussed in the context of what this means for us as teachers, and our responsibilities regarding ensuring equality and diversity. We then look at some of the barriers to equality and diversity, and how teachers can challenge and work to address them. Finally, as a teacher, you are invited to reflect on your professional learning during this short module and consider how you will take this learning forward in your professional practice. A short quiz, and a list of suggested resources for further engagement and information, is contained at the end of both Modules 1 and 2.

### 1.5 Definitions of Equality and Diversity

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, 2018) defines equality as the act of ensuring that everyone is able to “make the most of their lives and talents” and that they have an equal opportunity to do so. It goes on to mention factors including protected characteristics under the United Kingdom Equality Act 2010 (see section 1.6 below), and poverty, which should not lead to poorer life chances. Thompson (2018) cautions that equality should not mean that everyone is treated the same, and that for all to be treated with equal fairness, some difference may be essential. The distinction between equality and equity is explored in the second module. Thompson goes on to comment that equality has close links with social justice. This short (3 minute) You-tube video gives a commentary on the definitions of equality and diversity [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMwGMxam0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMwGMxam0) It goes on to discuss prejudice and discrimination, giving some helpful examples.

Diversity is defined by Thompson (2018, p.12) as meaning ‘variety’. He discusses the role that diversity has to play in recognising difference as a positive attribute, and that in addressing discrimination, it is necessary to be able to recognise diversity. In doing so, this promotes equality.
This TEDx talk, by Dr Marilyn Sanders Mobley, gives an insight into her views on “The Paradox of Diversity”. It’s around 16 minutes long. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCgqkJ5jXc

1.6 The United Kingdom Equality Act (2010)

The United Kingdom’s Equality Act (2010) replaced over 100 earlier pieces of legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) (DDA), and the Race Relations Act (1996), which addressed a range of characteristics which could lead to discrimination and inequality. Most of these developed from the historic Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was the first international agreement in 1948 on what human rights were. You can read more about it here https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/.


The United Kingdom Equality Act (2010) enshrined in law a series of protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation) which it was unlawful to discriminate against. It is also unlawful to discriminate against someone because they have an association with someone who has a protected characteristic, for example the carer for a person with a disability. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which is the national body in the UK for equality, has published a set of guidance related to the implications of the United Kingdom Equality Act which includes definitions of each protected characteristic: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-guidance

1.7 Equality and Diversity in the General Teaching Council for Scotland Professional Standard for Teachers

The General Teaching Council for Scotland Professional Standard for Teachers begins with Professional Values and Personal Commitment. The professional values of social justice, integrity, trust, and respect, with personal commitment, underpin the whole of a teacher’s approach to their work, and reflect long-standing Scottish principles. As stated in the Professional Guide for Equality
and Diversity, this commitment ‘should be demonstrated in your day-to-day behaviours and actions.’ In upholding the professional value of social justice, and in seeking equity of experience and enhanced life chances for all, teachers are embedding equality and recognition of diversity as a positive factor in their everyday teaching lives.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland website contains a helpful resource on engaging with the Professional Values and putting them into action: https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/professional-values-into-action.aspx There are several helpful challenge questions which can be used for self-reflection or in professional discussions.

1.8 Teachers’ Responsibilities Related to Equality and Diversity

As teachers, we are required to uphold the GTC Scotland Professional Code of Professionalism and Conduct (COPAC) https://www.gtcs.org.uk/regulation/copac.aspx and the Standard for Full Registration (SFR) https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/standards-for-registration.aspx, which are required standards for fitness to practice and define how teachers should live out their lives as respected members of society. Section 5 of the Code of Professionalism and Conduct refers to Equality and Diversity, and so is particularly relevant to this module. We are also required to uphold those policies of our employers which are relevant to this area. These may be anti-bullying, harassment, equality or perhaps dignity at work or inclusion policies. If you are unsure of which school, local authority or organisational policies are relevant, please take some time to find out. As well as ensuring that we abide by these as good citizens, we also need to know what to do if we find that we are being bullied, harassed or similar at work, or if we witness a colleague, pupil, parent, professional partner or other member of our school community being treated unequally or against one of these policies. It is our responsibility as teachers and, therefore, positive role models within society, to promote equality and diversity in our teaching and, more widely, in our everyday lives. Often, we are in a privileged position because of being teachers, and what we say carries importance and is listened to by others. This means that we can be a voice for those who are less privileged or whose voices are not heard as clearly or perhaps ignored. This is discussed more fully later in the module when we look at being a ‘bystander’.

Promoting equality and diversity in our teaching begins with the design of the learning experiences we provide, in considering whether the resources we use reflect the diversity found in today’s society, or whether they perhaps reflect the society of 10 or 15 years ago, which may have been very different, when the resource was written or purchased? There is also a duty on all public sector bodies (the Public Sector Equality Duty https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty) for ‘anticipatory planning’ which we will look at in a little more
detail in the second module. The International Baccalaureate (IB) have adopted a framework for planning called the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which encourages teachers to plan inclusively. Inclusion, and equality and diversity, should be underpinning principles and guide our planning from the outset, rather than being something which we add at a later stage. Many of the suggestions are applicable to teaching in any context, and not International Baccalaureate specific. You can read their research summary about Universal Design for Learning here: https://www.ibo.org/contentassets/318968269ae5441d8df5ae76542817a0/research-udl-summary-en.pdf

1.9 Teaching in a Diverse Scotland – what this means in practice

The Teaching in a Diverse Scotland report (Scottish Government, 2018) https://www.gov.scot/publications/teaching-diverse-scotland-increasing-retaining-minority-ethnic-teachers-scotlands-schools/ highlights that while Scottish society in general is diversifying, and at an increasing rate as we move further into the 21st century, the demographic of its teaching population is less quick to diversify and so there are not yet enough positive role models representing teachers with a range of protected characteristics. The report challenges all of us to reflect on how our practice might ‘currently be operating in ways that do not fully value black and minority ethnic staff’ (p.23), and to make changes to improve this. We all, as individual teachers, have a responsibility to encourage learners from all sectors of society to aim high and to consider teaching, and other respected professions, as a career choice. This needs to begin with the way in which we present teaching and teachers to our learners, through to how we support our student teachers and early career teachers, so that over time the teaching profession in Scotland mirrors more closely the ethnic diversity of Scotland’s population.

As teachers in an increasingly diverse Scotland, in a world where increasing levels of migration mean that multi-cultural and multi-lingual communities are the norm, our experience of being in the classroom as teachers is possibly rather different to when we were ourselves learners in school classrooms. Many of the changes, including the presumption of mainstreaming which led to many learners with identified Additional Support Needs being included in mainstream classrooms, have happened slowly and over time. Our pedagogy is changing to meet the needs of learners, perhaps sometimes without our realising that it has done so, but there is still work to be done here. In recent years, the warm welcome given by Scotland to refugees has meant that the children in our classrooms for whom English is not their first language has increased, sometimes almost overnight! As teachers we have echoed that warm welcome and we must ensure that we continue to do so.
1.10 Barriers to Equality and Diversity for Scotland’s Teachers

Many of the barriers that we encounter are because of people expressing their views which may discriminate against a person who has a protected characteristic, or a group in society which has one. For example, this may be a young child telling another child that they cannot play with the toy tractor because they are a girl, and girls aren’t farmers. Another may be the assumption that all families have a mum and a dad, without considering families where there are two mums or two dads, or families where children are adopted or fostered, or where a family member is transgender or identifies as non-binary. The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic saw discriminatory comments made by some individuals about Chinese people. For example, The Guardian and other newspapers reported that there was a rise in reported hate crimes (The Guardian, 18.02.2020) against people perceived to be of Chinese origin in the UK as the virus outbreak provided an opportunity for individuals to act on a prejudice that they already held. The individuals making these comments and engaging in hate crimes assumed that all people who they perceived to be of Chinese origin, (even when they were not, in fact, Chinese or if they were then had not been to China since the Coronavirus outbreak), must be carrying the virus and therefore a danger to be avoided.

An example of discrimination in school may be where a teacher refuses to use the microphone in a teaching space which has a loop system for people with hearing impairment, because they have a loud voice and can project to the back of the room. This means that people who use hearing aids may not be able to hear as clearly as if the microphone and loop system was being used.

Inadvertent discrimination can occur using gendered language, for example ‘boys and girls’ which excludes those pupils who are non-binary or transgender. The use of language such as ‘children’ or ‘everyone’ is more inclusive.

1.11 Institutional Racism and Discrimination

Institutional racism, and systemic racism, occurs in organisations where the prevailing attitude, perhaps of an owner or senior leadership team, or sometimes the community making up an organisation, is based on views which exclude people from minority backgrounds or who have a protected characteristic. It is believed that much of the institutional racism has developed from historical white privilege, where people of colour were perceived to be of less standing in society.

This article in ‘The Conversation’ by Mary Frances O’Dowd discusses institutional and systemic racism, giving some examples of how this can be embedded in cultures and organisations https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-systemic-racism-and-institutional-racism-131152

There is a link to Peggy McIntosh’s ‘invisible knapsack’ quiz which supports people to understand what white privilege is, and the implications of this for people of colour in society.
An example of institutional and systemic racism would be the now discontinued system of apartheid in South Africa, and the more recent tragic murder of George Floyd in America, which has led to actions being demanded to reverse institutional racism and discrimination in the American police force. George Floyd’s murder has led, as you may be aware from media reporting, to what Pam Ramsden terms a ‘collective uprising’, much of which has been organised by the Black Lives Matter global network. She discusses the impact of George Floyd’s murder, and of the coronavirus pandemic, on society which has led to collective uprising, in her article for ‘The Conversation’: https://theconversation.com/how-the-pandemic-changed-social-media-and-george-floyds-death-created-a-collective-conscience-140104. The prevalence of institutional racism also allows for instances of ‘othering’, which is defined by Oxford Languages as being when someone or a group of people are viewed or treated as ‘intrinsically different from and alien to oneself’. This article by John A Powell in The Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/nov/08/us-vs-them-the-sinister-techniques-of-othering-and-how-to-avoid-them describes ‘othering’ as being when a dominant culture feels threatened by a minority one, and he suggests that a country’s culture can influence this. An example of ‘othering’, or ‘conditional acceptance’ is that of how refugees may be viewed and treated by the country or society in which they have sought refuge, as described in this article https://financialtribune.com/articles/international/35492/othering-refugees. The author of the article comments that ‘othering’ is something which marks people out as being different and not belonging.

Sometimes an underlying prejudice can lead to situations where people may make decisions about how a person from an ethnic minority or who has a protected characteristic may feel. An example of this is the black Church of England trainee priest, Augustine Tanner-Ihm, whose application for a job was rejected because the demographic of the parish in Southern England was ‘monochrome white working class’ and he may have felt uncomfortable. You can listen to a podcast in which he discusses racism in the Church of England here https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/12-june/regulars/podcast/podcast-augustine-tanner-ihm-on-racial-inequality-in-the-c-of-e-and-the-black-lives-matter-movement. It is likely that the people rejecting his application did so because they were trying to think of him, as they mentioned ‘feeling uncomfortable’, but this can cause discrimination and sometimes without realising that this is what is happening.

In a similar way to institutional racism, some professionals have historically been viewed as being ‘women’s work’, for example primary school teachers, nursing; and others, such as engineering and science, have been predominantly male professions. This legacy, and to some extent a continuance today, can be seen in the lack of representation of people of colour, and women, in top levels of management. There has been a history of derogatory attitudes towards women, again rooted in
white privilege, stemming back to at least the time when a wife was considered to be her husband’s property and women were not allowed to vote. Equal voting rights were only brought into UK law in 1928. These derogatory attitudes are still prevalent today.

These include issues around: using the toilets in school as mentioned in this report[1](https://cypcs.org.uk/wpcypcs/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Flushed-with-Success-release.pdf) by the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young people; the 2019 legislation which made ‘up skirting’ (the practice of taking photos up a girl or woman’s skirt covertly) an offence and led to 10 men being convicted of a total of 16 offences in the first year (according to a Crown Prosecution Service report); and general poor treatment, including domestic abuse, of those who identify as being female, including trans women.

Women may not have been promoted, or may have experiences difficulties in seeking promotion, because the interviewer thought that she may become pregnant and leave her role or her current Headteacher knew that she and her partner were undergoing treatment for infertility. In the past, teachers may have been overlooked for Headships because they were perceived to be too young or unmarried and therefore not yet ‘settled’. There is action being taken to address the lack of equity in society, such as the Women on Boards organisation, and the Race Equality Charter which higher education institutions have developed, and the introduction of Scottish legislation in 2019 on domestic abuse and coercive control. It is now forbidden to request an applicant’s marital status or whether they have children in job applications [https://www.gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination/recruitment#:~:text=You%20can%20only%20ask%20for,interviewing%20candidates%20see%20this%20form.](https://www.gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination/recruitment#:~:text=You%20can%20only%20ask%20for,interviewing%20candidates%20see%20this%20form.) and you can only ask about someone’s age for certain job roles where these are age restricted, for example selling alcohol.

Once you have engaged with the suggested readings above from ‘The Conversation’, think about what you have learned. If you identify as being of white ethnicity, think about how you may have taken for granted white privilege and what you could do to address this in your work as a teacher. If you are from a minority ethnic background, how much of this reflects your own life experience so far? We will discuss the role of teachers as positive role models in a later section in the module and will address some of the actions we can take to challenge and address institutional racism and discrimination.

1.12 Cultural Assimilation

As teachers, we have important decisions to make about whether we choose to be visible role models and promote a positive image of a protected characteristic that we have, or whether to keep this private. If you decide that you would rather keep aspects of your protected characteristic
private at work, this is sometimes referred to as ‘cultural assimilation’. This is where, by taking on some aspects of the majority culture or hiding elements of your own, for example not wearing an item of clothing which people who practice your faith wear, or using vague language when talking about your partner so that it’s not obvious that you are in a gay / same-sex relationship, you align with the majority of people whose culture is dominant in your community or workplace. There is a real risk in that by assimilating, we lose important parts of our heritage and hereditary culture, as discussed in the article from The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/dec/08/assimilation-threatens-the-existence-of-other-cultures

Reflect on your experience of seeing others assimilate to fit the majority culture, or of your own experience of making a choice whether to assimilate. Have you ever thought actively about this before? Why might an individual choose to assimilate to ‘fit in’? Might they do this at work but not at home? Why might this be?

1.13 Teachers as Positive Role Models

If you have a protected characteristic, such as identifying as part of a minority community, and choose to be a positive role model, please revisit the Professional Guide ‘What you can do’ question on page 5 regarding acknowledgement and consideration of your positionality and identity. If you do choose to be a visible role model, what support might you need to feel confident, safe, and supported in this? Take some time to think about where support might be accessed. This may be from within your context or the wider communities and support provided within Scotland. As teachers, we may encounter barriers to equality and diversity through witnessing or being on the receiving end of discriminatory or prejudicial comments. The next section discusses some ways in which we can begin to address these barriers, by acting as ‘active bystanders’ who make effective interventions when we witness bullying or discrimination happening.

1.14 Addressing Barriers to Equality and Diversity for Scotland’s Teachers

As teachers who are registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, there is a duty placed upon us to challenge discrimination and barriers to equality and diversity when we encounter these. We have a duty to challenge assumptions and stereotypes too when these occur, and to be advocates for others whose voice may be hidden or silent. We are bystanders when we encounter or witness these events, the difference being whether we are ‘active bystanders’ and do something about it, or whether we are ‘passive bystanders’ and do not challenge these events. As teachers, we must be ‘active bystanders’ to ensure that the children in our care are not subjected to discriminatory bullying, and to uphold the professional values of social justice for all in our school
and wider communities. In doing so, we acknowledge the diverse range of views and experiences of people within our communities and advocate with them. It can be tricky to challenge discriminatory or prejudicial comments without offending people, for example if it is a parent who you hear making a racist comment about another family; or a student teacher making assumptions that all of the children attending school are from a certain background. There is helpful advice on how to address discriminatory bullying here:


Thompson (2018) theorises these influencers as being three separate, yet inter-related, layers of personal, social, and cultural influence which together make up a person’s values and views. A person’s values and views are influenced by that of their family and friends, especially when growing up, and by the wider values and views expressed in society. It is often the case that individuals have formed their values and views based on those held by their families and the social groups with whom they mix, both growing up and into adulthood. For example, a member of the Green party may have different political views to a member of the Conservative party, by virtue of the political values that they hold and the political party that they align with. A person who practises the Buddhist faith, for example, may have different views to a person who practices the Christian faith, as the faith communities have different underpinning core values and beliefs. Many of the values and views that we hold will have been handed down to us by our families, friends, and wider societal views, both during our childhoods and in the present time. When we challenge prejudice or discrimination, we need to be mindful of where those views and values have originated, and that especially with young children, they may be repeating views which have been expressed at home or in a social setting.

Spend a few minutes thinking about the times when you have heard someone making a discriminatory, prejudicial, or offensive comment against someone with a protected characteristic. Did you think about this at the time or is this something that you are just now realising was discriminatory? If you were to witness this again, how might you respond? If you are unsure of whether you would have the confidence to be an ‘active bystander’, then perhaps this is something that you will engage with further professional learning to develop.

1.15 Module 1 Conclusion

In this short introductory module, we have looked at the General Teaching Council for Scotland Professional Standard for Teachers to explore what the requirements and expectations are of us as registered teachers regarding equality and diversity. We then moved on to look at the definitions of
equality and diversity, and the Equality Act (2010). The recently published report Teaching in a Diverse Scotland was discussed in the context of what this means for us as teachers, and our responsibilities regarding ensuring equality and diversity. We then looked at some of the barriers to equality and diversity, and how teachers can challenge and work to address them. A list of suggested resources for further reading and engagement is provided on at the end of the module and is also available at the end of Module 2.

1.16 Reflections on Learning in Module 1
You are now invited to reflect on your professional learning during this short module and consider how you will take this learning forward in your professional practice.

Firstly, think about something that you learned which surprised you. Why were you surprised?

Next, think about something that you have learned which will influence your practice in the classroom, and why.

Finally, think about something that you have learned that you would like to share with colleagues, perhaps to take an aspect of school improvement or curriculum delivery forward. This may be reviewing the resources used to teach a topic or curriculum area or reviewing the way in which communications with pupils and parents are phrased to become more inclusive of the different family groups within your class.