

STUDENTS: KNOW YOUR EQUALITY RIGHTS



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Find out how the Equality Commission can help

Are you a student in further or higher education? Maybe you also have a part-time job or casual employment and are using a whole range of services in your everyday life? If so, it is important that you know what rights you have if you experience discrimination or unfair treatment.

Whatever the circumstances, if you are ever discriminated against or need to know more about rights or equality law, we are here to help.

Read on to find out more or visit our website – www.equalityni.org

Discrimination and harassment are unlawful

If you are treated unfairly or harassed you may have rights under anti-discrimination law. It can sometimes be hard to challenge unfair treatment, but if you don't, it could happen again. Taking advice when issues arise means that you can get your problem sorted and you may make life better for other people.

WHO IS PROTECTED?

The law protects you from discrimination because of your:

- **Age** - *whether you are a young person or an older person*
- **Sex/gender** - *including pregnancy and maternity, married/civil partnership status, gender reassignment (trans) and equal pay*
- **Race** - *this covers colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins including being a member of the Irish Traveller community*
- **Religious belief** - *this covers religious or similar philosophical belief, perceived community background or faith group as well as absence of any belief*
- **Political opinion** - *this refers to association with traditional political parties but has also been interpreted more widely in terms of general political philosophy*
- **Sexual orientation** - *whether you are lesbian, gay, straight or bisexual*
- **Disability** - *this includes physical disabilities, mental health issues or learning difficulties.*

WHAT THE LAW COVERS

Equality laws protect you from unfair treatment across all of these grounds and apply to many areas of everyday life including:

- gaining admission to college, university, an apprenticeship or training course
- work placements
- finding a job
- your experience in the workplace
- getting accommodation
- accessing healthcare and other services such as banking, insurance and finance
- using leisure facilities, shops, restaurants, pubs, clubs, etc.

For example are you being:

- discouraged from applying or rejected for a course or qualification traditionally associated with either males or females?
- subjected to homophobic banter by staff or other students at college?
- turned down by an employer because they consider you too young and inexperienced or too mature for the job?
- dismissed from a job or treated unfairly on your course because you are pregnant or have to take maternity leave?
- refused accommodation because of your race or ethnic background?
- refused access to sporting or leisure facilities because you are transgender?
- denied a reasonable adjustment for your disability by an employer, college/university or service provider?
- sexually harassed while on a work placement?
- subjected to sectarian abuse in college/university or in the workplace?

If so, you should seek advice from us about how to deal with the situation. Remember your employment equality rights apply from when you start a job, and are the same regardless of whether you work part-time or on a temporary or casual basis.

You are also protected from victimisation if you complain about discrimination.

You should be aware that public bodies, including universities and colleges, have a duty to promote equality and good relations for a range of groups as well as a responsibility not to discriminate.

HOW THE EQUALITY COMMISSION CAN HELP

If you feel that you have been treated unfairly on any of the grounds covered by equality laws you can contact the Commission for advice. Our services are free and confidential.

Ring us on **028 90 500 600** and ask to be put through to someone in our legal team for advice on possible discrimination

or email: **information@equalityni.org**

or use Contact us on our website: **www.equalityni.org**

In most cases people do not wish to make a formal complaint to a court or tribunal and want to clarify what courses of action are open to them to resolve a matter informally with the college, university, employer or service provider concerned.

However, you need to be aware that there are strict time limits if you do wish to pursue a discrimination complaint formally – 3 months for employment related cases and 6 months for complaints relating to services or education.

The Commission can only advise and help with complaints that fall within our remit. If the discrimination advice officer does not feel that we can help, they will try to signpost you to another statutory agency or support body. You should also raise issues relating to discrimination with your students' union or the equality officer in your college/university.

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find more information about your rights and good practice for employers and service providers on our website – **www.equalityni.org**
There are also useful resources for students at **www.doyoumeanme.org**

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP

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