# EQUITY

## Introduction

Equity is at the heart of Te Hautū Kahurangi | Tertiary Education Union's (TEU) vision for a fair and flourishing tertiary education sector.[1] It requires more than equal treatment: it means actively addressing systemic barriers and ensuring that institutions recognise and respond to the diverse needs of kaimahi (staff) and ākonga (students).

This policy recognises the intersecting inequities experienced by women, Māori, Pacific, disabled persons, queer, migrant, and other marginalised kaimahi and ākonga.

While equity is a shared foundation across all TEU policies, this policy focuses specifically on systemic fairness within the tertiary education sector. Issues of academic freedom, public funding, decent work, and democratic governance are addressed in detail in separate policies, though they remain connected to the realisation of equity.

## Whare – Our aspiration

We envisage a tertiary education system in which equity is embedded across all aspects of teaching, research, governance, and employment. In this vision, systemic barriers that limit participation, progression, or recognition are dismantled, and institutions are designed to be inclusive and fair from the outset.

Kaimahi are employed securely, paid equitably, and supported to pursue their careers in environments that are safe, respectful, and representative of Aotearoa New Zealand's diversity. Ākonga have equitable access to pathways that reflect their aspirations and potential, with meaningful support to ensure their success. Institutional leadership and decision-making structures are inclusive, transparent, and reflective of the communities they serve. Equity is not treated as an optional or peripheral concern, but as a defining measure of institutional quality.

## Pou – Why this policy is needed

Inequities remain entrenched in the tertiary education sector. Māori and Pacific ākonga continue to experience lower participation and completion rates, disabled ākonga face barriers to full inclusion and participation, and refugee-background and working-class ākonga are excluded from many existing support frameworks. Marginalised groups face

[1] Within the context of TEU policies, 'tertiary education sector' is the umbrella term used to infer the following sub-sectors: polytechnic; PRRISM (private; REAP; research institutes; statutory; miscellaneous); university; and Wānanga.

discrimination regarding both entry into the tertiary education workforce as well as fair and equitable conditions once employed. For kaimahi, casualisation, pay gaps, inequitable promotion processes, and excessive workloads are persistent features of the sector which have a greater impact on marginalised kaimahi. These conditions undermine both fairness and quality, with equity-related responsibilities often falling disproportionately on marginalised kaimahi without recognition or reward.

Government funding and regulatory settings too often compound inequities rather than address them, with recent policy changes reducing targeted equity support. Institutional cultures, while increasingly adopting equity statements, still lag in ensuring that commitments translate into lived realities. Without a systemic shift in how equity is understood and operationalised, these patterns will continue, serving the interests of those already privileged by existing structures while excluding those who are marginalised.

## Waka – Our actions

To achieve our aspirations, TEU will implement a range of the following actions.

### *Advocacy*

- Press for the reinstatement and expansion of equity-based funding, ensuring it explicitly supports ākonga and kaimahi facing systemic barriers.
- Demand transparent pay systems and regular equity audits (including terms, conditions, and staffing levels/turnover) across the sector to close gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps.
- Advocate for secure employment as the default, challenging casualisation and the misuse of fixed-term contracts.

### *Campaigning*

- Make equity a core demand in collective bargaining, including workload protections, recognition of cultural capital and pastoral labour, and accessible professional development.
- Campaign for transparent and fair promotion systems that value diverse contributions across teaching, research, service, and community engagement.
- Highlight inequities in government policy and hold institutions accountable for delivering on equity commitments.

### *Organising*

- Provide members with resources, training, and workshops to strengthen local equity advocacy.

- Support branch leadership teams and delegates to challenge inequitable practices in their workplaces, including through the use of workload models and pay audits.
- Publish regular union reports monitoring equity indicators, ensuring visibility and accountability across the sector.

### *Partnership*

- Uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi by working in partnership with iwi and hapū to design and implement equity initiatives.
- Collaborate with organisations representing Pacific, disabled persons, queer, migrant, and other communities to ensure intersectional approaches to equity.
- Integrate environmental justice into union advocacy so that equity and sustainability are advanced together.

## Policy sign-off and ownership details

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| **Equity assessment and policy whakapapa** | This policy was developed in late 2025. Input from TEU's committees and networks informed the content of this policy. Minor amendments were suggested by TEU Council in early 2026 – a working group was formed to coordinate these amendments. |

## Revision history

| Version | Date | Revision description | Owner |
|---|---|---|---|
| v1.0 | | | |
| v1.1 | | | |
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