

Disability Policy

Purpose of Policy	This policy sets out our commitment to upholding the principle of disability equality throughout our organisation.
Date and Version of Policy	Version 1.01 (November 2010)
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1. Background

1.1. The Duty to Promote Disability Equality came into force on 5 December 2006. The General Duty requires that the company shall, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (Act);
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- encourage participation by disabled persons in all aspects of student life; and
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

2. Introduction

2.1. The General Duty requires the company to adopt a proactive approach to mainstreaming disability equality into all decisions and activities.

2.2. The company has a comprehensive Equality Policy that sets out our objectives with regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity in relation to the provision of all its services and also in its role as an employer.

2.3. This Disability Equality Scheme, Race Equality Scheme, Gender Equality Scheme and the Equality Policy inform the company development plan. This Disability Equality Scheme clearly states how the company will continue to improve services and access to services for the disabled persons. This scheme will be reviewed ever three years as part of the review of the company, policies and procedures. The review will consider the following, considering reasonable costs and timescales:

- The company's services and policies, including services and policies it is proposing to introduce, to make sure they are not affecting some groups negatively and that all communities are reasonably satisfied with them.
- How the company will deal with evidence that its services and policies are not in line with the general duty.

- How the company will deal with complaints about the way it is meeting the duty or other complaints about disability equality.
- How the company will publish the results of its assessments, consultations and monitoring.
- How the company will make sure that everyone, whatever their disability, has access to information about the company and its services (within a reasonable expenditure budget.)
- How the company will make sure that its staff understand their responsibilities under the duty.
- How often the company will review the scheme.

3. Position Statement

- 3.1. The company is committed to the promotion of Equality & Diversity. We need to remove any barriers that are excluding people and our aim is for everyone to have the opportunity to achieve their potential.
- 3.2. The company has an Equality & Diversity Policy and a Race Equality Policy which are annually updated by each unit of responsibility to reflect progress against the demands of the duty. All policies and procedures are reviewed on a three year cycle.

4. Proposed New Services & Policies

- 4.1. The company recognises it is critical to assess the likely impact of policies or services it is proposing to introduce before they are adopted; this is to ensure that the policies and services introduced actively promote equality of opportunity for all.
- 4.2. Policies, in particular, are frequently adapted or replaced to reflect changes in the legislation, curriculum demand, social and political environment. Our objective is to build disability equality into the policy-making process and to make that process clear, open and inclusive.
- 4.3. As stated, all new policies and services are the subject of an impact assessment relative and appropriate to that subject in question. Such assessments are a systematic way of finding out whether a proposed policy affects certain groups differently and will enable the company to:
- Take account of the needs, circumstances and experiences of those affected by our policies.
 - Identify actual and potential inequalities in any outcomes.
 - Consider other ways of achieving the aims of the policy if the policy negatively impacts on certain groups.
 - Increase public, stakeholder and partner confidence in the fairness of our policies.
 - Develop better policies generally.

5. Monitoring Impact and Acting on Results

The company recognises that monitoring is an important way of assessing the effects of policies in practice and is a vital part of any strategy to promote equality. Monitoring will help us check whether our policies, operations and organisational culture are discriminating against some groups such as the disabled. This will help us find out why and how discrimination takes place. Where we find, or are informed of adverse impact, we will investigate the reasons for this and consider if we should revise the policy and procedures.

6. Training Staff

- 6.1. The company recognises that it is critical for its staff to have the skills and knowledge to help eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunities. To do their jobs without unlawfully discriminating against any person or groups our staff need appropriate training. The company will train all staff on all strands of equality with the objective of raising awareness on equality issues:
- To eliminate discrimination in service delivery.
 - To give an understanding of the general and specific duties in this scheme and the other elements of the Equality Action Plan.
- 6.2. Staff who work directly with learners will receive specific training appropriate to their role with the company and senior managers will receive training with reference to:
- A general understanding of equality issues as they affect further education providers.
 - How to carry out assessments, consultation and monitoring and how to produce and publish reports on them and publicise them.

7. Employment & Training

- 7.1. The company will ensure employment policies and procedures follow the requirements of legislation and that best practice is applied to prevent any discrimination in recruitment, selection, pay, promotion, training, grievances and exit from employment. Policies and strategies will be developed to ensure the full potential of all its employees is realised and, in particular, the company will acknowledge any special needs of those employees who are disabled or from ethnic minorities.
- 7.2. In pursuing this aim the company will adopt and subscribe to best practice techniques as advanced by other agencies, e.g. Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development.
- 7.3. In recruitment advertising, the company will advertise in the appropriate media to ensure that it targets its audience to get the best available talent and ensure that application packs are non-discriminatory.
- 7.4. The company will promote its commitment to equality policies in staff advertisements and job packs, emphasising that the company will welcome job applications from all members of the community.
- 7.5. The company will acknowledge that recruitment and selection decisions should be based upon objective, measurable and reasonable selection criteria
- 7.6. All staff, applicants and new recruits will be provided with copies of the company's Equality Policy.
- 7.7. The company will ensure training in non-discriminatory practices is provided to service managers involved in recruitment and selection.
- 7.8. The company will continue to maintain and develop existing equality monitoring arrangements and take appropriate action as a result of its findings.
- 7.9. The company will monitor its employee development process to ensure that training and development opportunities continue to be open to all employees and will not be influenced by factors such as disability, race, gender, marital/family status, age, faith, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.
- 7.10. The company will regularly review its disciplinary and grievance procedures to ensure an appropriate mechanism is in place to deal with bullying and harassment.
- 7.11. The company will ensure that it uses a pay structure that ensures employees are rewarded fairly and equitably.

- 7.12. The company will ensure ongoing training programmes for staff and students to both raise awareness of equality issues and to the application of equality principles in relation to service delivery to all sections of the community.
- 7.13. The company commitment to equality in employment and in service delivery will be reinforced in staff induction programmes for new staff.

8. Complaints

- 8.1. The company positively welcomes feedback from learners and stakeholders. Any member of staff, student or member of the community can make and record a complaint. The company is aware that for those sections of the community who have difficulties in accessing services the company's formal Complaints Procedure may also be inaccessible.
- 8.2. Our objective in having a complaint procedure is to ensure that concerns are addressed. A pre-requisite for this is that all parties have confidence in the responsiveness of the company. The company will accordingly encourage the use of organisations or person, to act as an advocate for the complainant.
- 8.3. All complaints are formally recorded in accordance with the adopted complaints procedure and an annual report is presented to the Board of Directors of the company. The complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint and what action, if any, will be taken by the company. If this does not satisfy the complainant then they will be advised of their right to take the complaint to the Equality & Human Rights Commission.