



EQUALITY POLICY FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

1 Introduction

Orbital South Colleges are fully committed to the active promotion of equality of opportunity, to valuing the diversity of all its staff and students, inclusion and to challenging discriminatory behaviour.

2 Scope

This Policy applies to all staff, students, apprentices, prospective staff, prospective students, prospective apprentices, freelancers, contractors, agency workers, carers and volunteers working at the Group and third parties working on behalf of the Group.

3 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out our policy in relation to Equality & Diversity and in doing so, encompassing the provisions of the Equality Act which came into force in October 2010. The Equality Policy for Staff and Students harmonises previous College equality policies and ensures consistency across the organisation to ensure compliance with legislation and a fair workplace and place of study. The purpose also aims to summarise a single equality policy and the different strategies that the College uses to support and celebrate difference to ensure that students and staff achieve their potential.

4 Responsibility for implementation

It is the responsibility of the Executive Director of Human Resources & Professional Development to ensure that procedures are in place and that these procedures are acted upon for staff. It is the responsibility of the College Principal to ensure that this Policy is implemented for students by ensuring procedures are in place and that these procedures are acted upon.

5 Definitions and scope

The Equality Act (2010) covers nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

6 Policy Statements

6.1 Discrimination

All staff and students are treated with equal dignity and fairness regardless of their actual or perceived age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race,

religion or belief,sex, or sexual orientation.

Orbital South Colleges seek to ensure that there is no discrimination against staff or students, either directly or indirectly, by perception or association, nor will there be any bullying, harassment or victimisation. Such behaviour is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the Bullying & Harassment Policy and/or the StaffDisciplinary or Grievance Policies and Procedures.

6.2 Age

With the removal of the Default Retirement Age, employers are no longer able to issue notifications of retirement. Older employees can still voluntarily retire at a time of their choosing and draw any occupational pension they are entitled to in line with the pension scheme's rules. This does not affect a person's state pension age and entitlements, which may well be separate from the age at which they retire.

The experience of 14-18 year old and adult learners should be fair and equal regardless of age. The college works to review the experience of all students and apprentices to ensure and equitable experience.

6.3 Disability

Disability is broadly defined as 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the member of staff's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The College will make every effort to ensure reasonable adjustments are put in place for disabled staff/students or who become disabled whilst employed or studying at the College. Through this process advice may be sought from Occupational Health for staff members. Risk assessments and fitness to study will be applied to support the best experience for students.

The College has been awarded the 'Disability Two Ticks Symbol' in recognition of its commitment to positively promote the employment of disabled people.

6.4 Gender Reassignment

The College aims to provide a supportive environment to staff and students who are proposing to undergo (even if they are not under medical supervision), are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

Staff and students requiring time off work for medical reasons as a result of undergoing gender reassignment, will be treated in the same way as staff undergoing any other type of medical treatment as per the College Attendance Management Policy & Procedure.

6.5 Marriage and Civil Partnership

The College treats staff or students who are married and staff or students who are in a civil partnership in the same way. Any benefits that are available to spouses of staff are also available to civil partners.

6.6 Pregnancy and Maternity

In line with the College Maternity Policy & Procedure, staff or students who are pregnant have the right not to be treated less favourably.

Pregnant staff will have access to the same training and promotion opportunities as other staff and will be able to keep the same duties and responsibilities. Sickness in relation to maternity will be managed in line with the College Attendance Management Policy & Procedure.

Students will be supported by advice and guidance during pregnancy to assess support needed to complete studies or if deferral of study or break in study is appropriate. Sickness in relation to maternity for students will be managed in line with student and apprentice attendance but will also be supported with study support or catch-up guidance as appropriate.

6.7 Race

For the purposes of the Equality Act race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. A racial group can be made up of two or more different racial groups e.g. Black British.

6.8 Religion or Belief

Under the Equality Act, religion includes any religion. It also includes a lack of religion for example staff or students are protected if they do not follow a certain religion or have no religion at all.

Religion must have a clear structure and belief system. To be protected, a belief must satisfy various criteria, including that it is weighty and a substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.

Where required, the College will aim to provide a quiet space for multi-faith prayer or reflection room where possible for the use of staff and students.

Where a request for leave is made for a day related to a belief system, every attempt should be made to meet the request taking into account the needs of the College and studies if appropriate. This may be granted from annual leave or unpaid leave if appropriate or may result in remote learning/work for students or apprentices. Initial requests should be made to the line manager as per the annual leave procedures. Requests for this adjustment for students should be requested via Course Leaders in the first instance, support can then be provided by HoDs and DoLs.

6.9 Sex

To help ensure sex discrimination does not occur in the College, regular reviews will take place on pay, policies, promotion, and grievances. A review of EDIMs data takes place termly to review the retention and achievement of students based on sex.

Flexible working requests will be considered seriously in line with business requirements and accommodated where possible.

6.10 Sexual Orientation

A supportive environment is provided for staff and students who wish it to be known they are Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Heterosexual as well as any other orientation. However, it is the right of individuals to choose whether they wish to be open about their sexuality in the College. The College wishes to encourage individuals to be open about, and feel able to disclose, their sexuality without fear of exclusion.

Employment policies and procedures are family friendly and will apply equally to heterosexual partnerships, same sex partnerships and to non-traditional parenting and care arrangements.

6.11 Recruitment and Selection of Staff, Students and Apprentices

Equal opportunities data collected during the recruitment process will only be used for monitoring purposes. The data will be collected on a separate section of the application form, will remain completely confidential and will not be made available to the recruitment panel. For enrolment on programmes at the college this data will be stored securely and limited where appropriate to certain roles.

Staff

Pre-employment health checks for staff will only ask questions of candidates that help decide whether reasonable adjustments need to be made for the person, decide whether an applicant can carry out a function that is essential to the job, monitor diversity among people making applications for jobs.

Job descriptions and person specifications will be drafted in line with the specific business requirements of the job.

In order to attract as many job applications as possible from the widest cross-section of community, a wide spectrum of advertising methods will be used in accordance with the level and nature of the job vacancy.

Interviews will be offered to candidates with a disability, who meet the minimum criteria required for the job, in line with the Two Ticks Disability Symbol.

Applicants will be considered on their abilities to carry out the job based on the job description, criteria set out in the person specification and the College Competencies.

Students

Fitness to study and IAG interviews for support will take place as appropriate to support students before and into their studies. Efforts will also be made to reasonable adjustments including exam access arrangements.

6.12 Staff Training and Development

All staff have a responsibility to help ensure a working environment in which everyone is respected. To help ensure that staff are aware of how their actions or behaviour may impact others, all staff are required to successfully complete mandatory equality and diversity training.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone working at the College has the responsibility to ensure that they do not unfairly discriminate against or offend someone else on the grounds of equality.

All line managers and Head of Departments are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy with the support of HR.

8 Links to other College Policies and Procedures

- Bullying & Harassment
- Grievance
- Annual Leave
- Maternity
- Adoption
- Special Parental
- Disciplinary
- Capability
- Attendance Management
- Paternity
- Parental

9 Access to Policy

This policy and procedures are available on the intranet and from the Human Resources Department.

10 Training

Questions about this policy/procedure, and requests for training, guidance or information on this policy/procedure, should be directed to the HR Team.

11 Mechanisms for Feedback

Constructive feedback is welcome and should be sent through to the Executive Director of Human Resources & Professional Development. Trade unions are consulted on all College policies.

- 12 **Produced by:** Executive Director of Human Resources and Professional Development with amends from Vice Principal – Quality, Innovation and Student Experience **Date:** May 2022
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- 14 **Approved by:** Learning and Quality Committee **Date:** November 2022
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