

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

THE POLICY

This policy applies to all staff including contractors and learners and covers all work-related functions and activities including external training courses sponsored by the company.

It also applies for all recruitment, selection and promotion decisions.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that no learner, job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on any grounds or conditions which cannot be justified. These include direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, disability, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, marital status, sexual orientation, family responsibility, trade union activity, class, political or religious beliefs.

This policy will give full consideration to the requirements and intent of the Equality Act, 2010. The nine protected characteristics within the Equality Act, 2010 are:

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|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| » Age | » Gender reassignment | » Sexual Orientation |
| » Disability | » Pregnancy and maternity | » Religion or belief |
| » Sex | » Race | » Marriage and civil partnership |

Furthermore, the company does not discriminate directly or indirectly in the provision of services to learners and will make whatever reasonable adjustments are necessary to overcome barriers to using its services caused by disability.

The company will therefore make reasonable adjustments to working arrangements and / or physical premises to accommodate employees and learners with disabilities.

Types of Unlawful Discrimination

Direct Discrimination: Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of protected characteristics they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by Association: This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception Discrimination: This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination: Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in your company that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment: Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”. Employees and learners are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

Victimisation: Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, 2010 or because they are suspected of doing so.

Anti-harassment and Bullying

The company is striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment as well as for the learners.

Harassment to employees or learners on grounds of sex or race or other characteristic includes repeated offensive or unacceptable comments, action, suggestions, or physical contact that are found to be objectionable or create an intimidating work environment. Such harassment is deemed as gross misconduct and any employee / learner found to have committed such harassment will be liable to disciplinary action.

Our company believes that all employees and learners should be treated with dignity and respect. Any discrimination, victimisation, harassment or bullying behaviour will be dealt with as a serious matter potentially leading to disciplinary action / dismissal.

The company believes that each employee and learner is responsible for his / her own behaviour and for maintaining an environment in which discrimination, harassment and victimisation are regarded as unacceptable. In addition, we all have responsibility not to indirectly support unfair behaviour by ignoring what is happening around us.

What to do: Informally

If you believe that you have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation, we encourage you to speak to the person concerned and seek to resolve the matter. Approach them and explain that you find the behaviour unacceptable. Ask them to recognise the effect of their actions and stop acting in that way.

Remember that you can approach the person with the support of a fellow learner or line manager / employee of our organisation. However, please recognise that at the informal stage their role can only be one of support or assistance. Ask a line manager / employee of our organisation or your fellow learner as the case may be to talk to the person on your behalf, if it is too difficult or too embarrassing to do this yourself.

If your harasser is acting anonymously then speak to HR manager of our organisation as soon as possible in order that appropriate safeguards can be put in place.

What to do: Formally

If you believe the behaviour is serious and you prefer a formal approach, or if the behaviour continues after the informal procedure has been used, we encourage you to use the formal procedure.

Make your complaint in writing as soon as possible to HR manager of our organisation (whose contact details can be obtained by asking our customer services team), clearly setting out your areas of concern and giving details of any alleged incidents.

The manager will then invite you to a meeting to explain your allegations so that they can fully understand and investigate the details. After this meeting, they will conduct a series of interviews with the alleged harasser and anyone else who can assist with the investigation. The managers will then consider all the facts, consider the appropriate course of action and notify you of the outcome they have reached in writing.

While investigations are on-going, you should avoid contact with the alleged harasser where possible. If appropriate, you will be offered counselling and on-going support to ensure no further harassment takes place.