



## EQUALITY POLICY FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

### 1. Introduction

Orbital South Colleges are fully committed to the active promotion of equality for all staff, students and potential staff or students. We recognise the value of a diverse community, with varied lived experiences and knowledge in improving the experience and outcomes of our students.

### 2. 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 that guides the College to support and celebrate difference to ensure that students and staff achieve their potential.

### 3. 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.

It is the responsibility of the Director of People and Culture 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.

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

### 4. 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.

### 5. Policy Statement

Orbital South Colleges aims to provide an environment which values the positive contribution of all members of our community, enabling them to achieve their full potential and to gain benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in the life of the College Group.

All members of our community 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 will comply with all relevant legislation and good practice 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 Staff Disciplinary or Grievance Policies and Procedures.

The College aims to:

- Recognise that our college community can be best served by drawing its members from across society, bringing together a wealth of experience, skills and talent that benefits all.
- Encourage an environment that values the sharing of knowledge and lived experience from all members of our community, recognising the value of this to us as a whole.
- Ensure that the equal opportunities policy statement, accompanying codes of practice and other relevant policies and procedures are available to all members and prospective members of the College Group.
- Establish support systems for staff and students who feel themselves subjected to discrimination.
- Provide training to ensure that equal opportunities principles inform the teaching and learning processes for staff and students.
- Ensure equality of access to Education for all by monitoring and reviewing the recruitment, selection, and assessment criteria for students.
- Ensure equality of access to employment to the College by monitoring the recruitment, selection, and promotion processes for all staff.
- Ensure that the physical environment and buildings reflect the needs of disabled staff and students.
- Ensure that contractors, institutions, or individuals who interact with the College are aware of this policy and adhere to it.
- Regularly review and monitor all institutional policies and practices to ensure compliance with equal opportunity practice.

## 6. Legal framework and Definitions

The following provides the legal framework as set out in the Equality Act 2010. However, the College aspires to not only meet the legal requirements but to move beyond these and to continuously take actions to promote equal opportunities in everything we do.

### 6.1 Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act (2010) covers nine protected characteristics:

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

In addition to these 9 protected characteristics, OSC also recognises the right of our staff and students to be themselves regardless of:

- Culture
- Educational background
- Physical and mental ability
- Caring responsibilities
- Physical appearance

## 6.2 Discrimination and Harassment

**Equality** can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups in employment and education, as well as access to goods and services; the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation. Equity is about valuing a person 'as an equal' and treating people according to their needs and characteristics to achieve an equal or fair outcome – it's not necessarily about treating everyone the same.

**Diversity** is defined as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for the wider organisation.

**Discrimination** is less favourable treatment which is unlawful, and which is not objectively justified.

**Harassment** can be described as unwanted behaviour, including for example, emails, remarks, or gestures, which are intended or have the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person. This can be related to gender, sexuality, race, religion or other "protected characteristics" and it includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment.

**Victimisation** broadly refers to derogatory treatment directed towards someone who has made or is believed to have made or supported a colleague's complaint under the Equality Act. It can also include situations where a complaint hasn't yet been made but someone is victimised or treated unfairly because it's suspected they might make one.

The Orbital South College Equality and Diversity procedures sets out a more detailed definition of the forms of discrimination and harassment.

## 7. 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.

## 8. Links to other College Policies and Procedures

Bullying and Harassment	Disciplinary
Grievance	Capability
Annual Leave	Attendance Management
Maternity	Paternity
Adoption	Parental Leave
Special Parental Leave	Support and Intervention Procedure

**9. Access to Policy**

This policy and procedures are available on OSC Gateway.

**10. Mechanisms for Feedback**

Constructive feedback is welcome. Questions about this policy/procedure, and requests for training, guidance, or information on this policy/procedure, should be directed to the People Team.

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