



Equality and Diversity Policy

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Contents	Page
1. Equality and Diversity Ethos Statement	3
2. Background	3
3. Public Sector Equality Duty	3
4. Specific Duties	4
5. Scope	5
6. Intent	6
7. Implementation	7
8. Monitoring	8
9. Promotion of Equality and Diversity	9
10. Review	9

Equality and Diversity Ethos Statement

Acquire Learning College is fully committed to promoting, maintaining and supporting equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. Acquire Learning College aims to create an environment where all individuals can achieve their full potential and gain a feeling of self-esteem and respect for and from all others. Acquire Learning College expresses its opposition to all forms of inequality and discrimination. This Equality and Diversity policy is the principal policy for equality, diversity and social inclusion for Acquire Learning College.

1. Background

1.1 The Equality Act 2010:

The Equality Act 2010 became law on 1st October 2010. The Act introduces common definitions of discrimination. The nine 'protected characteristics' under the Act are:

- a. Age
- b. Disability
- c. Gender
- d. Race
- e. Gender reassignment (people undergoing gender reassignment or who are trans-gender)
- f. Marriage and civil partnership
- g. Pregnancy and maternity
- h. Religion or belief
- i. Sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual orientation)

1.2 Learners and staff must be protected from discrimination and harassment on these grounds. The Act also protects against discrimination by association and perception, e.g. a partner or carer of someone with a protected characteristic should also be protected from discrimination and harassment.

2. Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty is set out in section 149 of the Act and came into force on 5th April 2011.

2.1 The Equality Duty has **three aims**. It requires public bodies to have ***due regard*** to the need to:

- a. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- b. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and
- c. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

2.2 Acquire Learning College must have *due regard* to these duties in the carrying out of its functions. Having *due regard* means consciously thinking about the three aims of the general duty as part of the process of decision-making.

- 2.3 For example, having due regard to the need to **advance equality of opportunity** involves considering the need to:
- a. remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
 - b. meet the needs of people with protected characteristics; and
 - c. encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.
- 2.4 **Fostering good relations** involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

3. Specific duties

- 3.1 The Public Sector specific duty requires all public bodies to publish information to demonstrate the extent to which it furthered the aims of the general equality duty. Subsequent information must be published at least annually.
- 3.2 The regulations require public bodies to:
- a. Publish equality objectives every four years
 - b. Publish information annually to demonstrate their compliance with the general Equality Duty;
 - c. Publish information relating to their employees (for bodies with 150 or more staff) and others affected by their policies and practices (such as service users, e.g. learners).
- 3.3 All information must be published in a way that is accessible to the public.
- 3.4 Acquire Learning College will uphold its public sector duty as outlined above and actively seek to ensure that both learners and staff experience equality of opportunity and are free from harassment, discrimination or victimisation of any kind, regarding the protected characteristics. Furthermore, Acquire Learning College recognises and extends this policy to include, social status and deprivation, homelessness, unemployment, asylum and refugee status or membership of a trade union, or for any other identifiable cause protected by law.
- 3.5 As a responsible body, Acquire Learning College recognises and accepts its vicarious liability for the actions of staff, learners and sub-contractors. Acquire Learning College will comply with all legislation, regulations, statutory and non-statutory codes of practice and our contractual requirements relating to equality and diversity.
- 3.6 Acquire Learning College will challenge all forms of inequality, discrimination and harassment, and actively promote opportunities for the groups mentioned in 1.1 and foster good relations between them. This work is regarded as the responsibility of all staff in Acquire Learning College.
- 3.7 Any action which contravenes this policy renders individuals employed by Acquire Learning College or learners liable for disciplinary action. Evidence of discrimination or harassment may be considered as gross misconduct. Clients or contractors who contravene the policy

can expect appropriate action.

4. Scope

- 4.1 The Corporation of Acquire Learning College has an ultimate role in approving, championing, promoting and monitoring the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 4.2 The following groups and post-holders have responsibilities for the development and implementation of policies relating to equality and diversity for staff and learners.
- 4.3 The Chief Executive Officer and Principal is responsible for managing Acquire Learning College's committees and boards to ensure compliance with legislation.
- 4.4 The Senior Management Teams are responsible for ensuring that the Equality and Diversity Policy is implemented in all aspects of its work.
- 4.5 The Curriculum Director, Safeguarding and Prevent Leads and Head of Learner Services, Experience and Employment are the designated senior officers with responsibility for equality and diversity for learners at Acquire Learning College. The postholders will be responsible for raising awareness of equality and diversity procedures and practices among the learner body.
- 4.6 Acquire Learning College Managers and Curriculum Managers are responsible for implementing the Equality and Diversity Policy in relation to staff and learners in their curriculum service area.
- 4.7 The Human Resources Director is the designated senior officer with responsibility for equality and diversity for staff at Acquire Learning College. The HR Department is responsible for formulating, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Equality and Diversity Policy in respect of staff/learners and for raising awareness of equality and diversity procedures and practices among the staff.
- 4.8 The Learner Services Departments at Acquire Learning College are responsible for raising awareness of equality and diversity procedures and practices monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Equality and Diversity Policy in respect of learners. Thus, reporting back to the HR Department.
- 4.9 The Equality and Diversity Awarding Bodies/Organisations have responsibility for monitoring equality and diversity practices across Acquire Learning College, to provide guidance to staff and learners on equality and diversity matters and to complete regular reviews and update of their Equality and Diversity activities.
- 4.10 Every staff member has an implied duty under their contract of employment to comply with the requirements of this policy.
- 4.11 Every learner has an implied duty under the respective Learner Charter and Code of Conduct to comply with the requirements of this policy.
- 4.12 Any individuals or organisations contracted within Acquire Learning College have an implied duty under their contract of employment to comply with the requirements of this policy.

- 4.13 Any learners and staff working on placement outside Acquire Learning College will be asked to understand the policy requirements of that organisation, whilst ensuring they comply with the policy of Acquire Learning College.
- 4.14 Acquire Learning College will check that organisations who have learners and staff on extended work placement at their premises seek to comply with Acquire Learning College Equality and Diversity Policy.

5. Intent

- 5.1 Through its recruitment, selection and admission procedures, Acquire Learning College will seek to ensure that it supports equality and diversity in all aspects of education and employment, so that the learner body, workforce and Corporation reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.
- 5.2 Acquire Learning College will seek to achieve equality for all learners and to engage all learners, irrespective of their cultural background in all aspects of teaching, learning and support. It is committed to the attempt to 'narrow the gap' where learners from one diversity strand achieve less well than those from other strands.
- 5.3 Acquire Learning College is committed to achieving equality for all staff in training, career development, promotion and reward, and will support staff to help them maximise opportunities to promote equality and diversity.
- 5.4 Any form of unfair discrimination against learners or staff will be tackled effectively and with the aim of preventing such discrimination from occurring again in future.
- 5.5 Teaching materials and methods, and all forms of general communication with learners will strive to be sensitive to different cultures and will seek to promote Equality and Diversity and foster good relations between people from different groups.
- 5.6 Acquire Learning College will support where possible efforts to rehabilitate ex-offenders. However, Acquire Learning College reserves the right to refuse such applications where it is concluded that admitting the individual concerned poses a danger to other learners or staff or an unacceptable level of corporate risk. Applications to Acquire Learning College courses from ex-offenders will be considered via a review panel making recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer and Principal.
- 5.7 Opportunities will be sought to extend the influence of Acquire Learning College's Equality and Diversity good practice to parents, Higher Education institutions and other partner organisations, employers with whom we work, the local community, and the FE sector generally.

6. Implementation

- 6.1 Implementing equal opportunities is an ongoing process that will be regularly reviewed by Acquire Learning College's Senior Leadership Teams and the Equality and Diversity Awarding bodies/Organisations.
- 6.2 All staff will be made aware of the Equality and Diversity Policy during the induction process. Additional training will also be conducted for staff during whole Acquire Learning College training days.
- 6.3 Acquire Learning College will produce an annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan to support the development and provision of equality and diversity. The action plan will be monitored by the Equality and Diversity Acquire Learning College 's Senior Leadership Teams and the Equality and Diversity Awarding bodies/Organisations.
- 6.4 The Senior Leadership Teams will review all policies and procedures to ensure that a commitment to equality and diversity is continually evident. Equality Impact Assessments may be conducted on key strategic documents and projects and policies related to learners and human resources at the time of their revision.
- 6.5 Acquire Learning College marketing and support materials will seek to encourage applications and enquiries from all areas of the community, reflecting the ethos of this Equality and Diversity Policy. Core prospectus information will be provided in alternative formats on request.
- 6.6 Acquire Learning College aims to provide support services during enrolment and on programme to help in the identification of additional learner support needs where necessary.
- 6.7 Equality and Diversity training, advice and guidance and support will be provided to ensure that all staff, learners understand their duties and obligations in law.
- 6.8 Acquire Learning College will protect the confidentiality of disclosure of sensitive matters related to equality and diversity. If information needs to be shared, for example on the grounds of health and safety or criminal law, care will be taken to share only what is necessary and to record what was shared, with whom, and why.
- 6.9 Acquire Learning College will neither promote, nor permit the promotion of any one religious faith or culture. All individuals will be expected to adhere to Acquire Learning College policies, rules and regulations, regardless of their personal faith or religion. Whilst Acquire Learning College resources exist primarily for the delivery of learning activities; arrangements will be made, where this is practicable, for staff or learners to carry out essential religious observance. Dedicated facilities cannot be provided for faith groups. It will be at the discretion of Acquire Learning College whether lettings arrangements can be entered into with external faith-based organisations. Arrangements will not be entered into where such an organisation seeks to promote others to its cause and where the event or activity is barred to those of different faiths or no faith.
- 6.10 Staff who believe they have not been treated in accordance with the Equality and Diversity Policy may wish to make a complaint. This may be made either informally or formally in accordance with the Human Resources Policies and Procedures.

- 6.11 Acquire Learning College will consider it to be a disciplinary offence under this Policy if any employee makes a false accusation against another employee regarding an alleged breach of the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 6.12 Learners who believe they have not been treated in accordance with the Equality and Diversity Policy may wish to make a complaint. This may be either informally or formally in accordance with Acquire Learning College's Complaints Policy.
- 6.13 The Senior Leadership Teams, Acquire Learning College Managers and Curriculum Managers are responsible for dealing with complaints under this Policy. While it may be appropriate to deal with a complaint informally, it must be noted that any breach of the Equality and Diversity Policy may be grounds for disciplinary action under the Learner/Staff Code of Conduct and Learner/Staff Disciplinary/Capability Policy.

7. Monitoring

- 7.1 Acquire Learning College will conduct comprehensive and effective monitoring of all aspects of the Policy, both on an ongoing basis and as education and employment policies and practices change. Benchmarking data will be sought for monitoring gender, ethnicity, age and disability.
- 7.2 The Senior Leadership Teams will receive data which will inform the planning process and the implementation of this Policy.
- 7.3 Monitoring will be undertaken in accordance with best practice recommendations, particularly from the following bodies: OFSTED; the Association of Colleges; and The Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- 7.4 Acquire Learning College will monitor the implementation of this Policy as part of annual training activities, through staff and learner focus groups and staff exit interviews.
- 7.5 An annual quality assurance audit for equality and diversity will be completed by the Curriculum and HR Director, along with the Safeguarding and Prevent Leads and Head of Learner Services, Experience and Employment. The audit will review the respective Acquire Learning College's practices for equality and diversity provision, including the effectiveness of the respective Acquire Learning College's policies and procedures, response to new legislation, successful resolution of any complaints or grievances in relation to equality and diversity, the effectiveness of staff training, provision of support and services for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and health and safety aspects of equality and diversity.
- 7.5 An annual report on equality and diversity matters will be prepared and submitted to the Board.

8. Promotion of Equality and Diversity

- 8.1 Acquire Learning College will promote its equality and diversity policies and practices to staff through training, development and the induction programme for new staff.
- 8.2 All learners will receive a briefing on equality and diversity during induction. Additional guidance will be available through Acquire Learning College's tutorial programme.
- 8.3 Copies of this policy will be made available on Acquire Learning College's website.
- 8.4 Information on learners and staff at Acquire Learning College will be made available on Acquire Learning College's website in line with the Public Sector Specific duties deriving from the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.5 Acquire Learning College will set, publish (on its websites) and evaluate equality objectives in line with the Public Sector Specific duties.
- 8.6 All Acquire Learning College Policies will be required to promote and make appropriate reference to equality and diversity matters where appropriate.

9. Review

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in accordance with legislative and educational developments.