

exeter college



Equality and Diversity Policy

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1 Purpose and Aims

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish guidance regarding Equality and Diversity by stating key principles, outlining structures and describing monitoring arrangements. The College shall fulfil its public sector duty by complying with current equality legislation.

We believe that all people are of equal worth and entitled to human rights. We aim to ensure that learners, their parents or guardians, staff, visitors, corporation members and suppliers are treated with dignity, respect, and equality regardless of their individual protected characteristics namely age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or sex.

The College believes that the diversity of its membership both enriches the teaching and learning experience and creates a welcoming working environment for its staff and learners. Harnessing these differences contributes to a productive environment in which all people are valued, where their individual potential is maximised and in which our mission as a College is achieved. As such, we strive to create a teaching and learning, working and social environment that is free from discrimination and actively celebrates diversity.

1.2 Exeter College is committed to both eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our workforce community. Our aim is that our learners and staff will be representative of all sections of society and that each learner and employee feels their contribution is respected and that they are able to give their best. As an employer, we oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All employees, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. A similar set of values will underpin the recruitment of learners to programmes of training and study. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation. To that end, the aim of this policy is to foster equality and fairness for all College members and those who deal with us. Through the College culture we aim to educate, inform and nurture best practice and behaviour in relation to Equality and Diversity in our student body.

1.3 The application of the principles of Equality and Diversity leads to best practice in education, in which fairness of opportunity for learners is a basic right. This policy is therefore underpinned by the following values, observation of which will reduce barriers to learning:

- equality as the basis of social justice;
- active challenges to stereotypes, prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour;
- acknowledging and celebrating diversity;
- respect for others regardless of visible and non-visible differences;
- neutral language concerning protected characteristics;
- compliance with legislation;
- commitment to inclusive education by ensuring that the principle of diversity informs our activities;
- support for learners to develop their full potential by recognising the individual not the differences between groups of people who share protected characteristics;
- accountability of College members for compliance with this policy

1.4 The College embraces the principle of Equity. We recognise individuals have different needs and circumstances that may require different support.

1.5 Staff and learners each have a 'Code of Conduct' to which they are expected to adhere. These 'Codes' explain about behaving and communicating in a respectful way to all. Staff should endeavour to use neutral language which does not imply value judgements when referring to the protected characteristics. This applies whether the language is spoken, written, electronic or published. This is because use of language can imply attitudes which could be interpreted as negative or discriminatory. Staff should take care to demonstrate respect and be mindful of inappropriate references which may, albeit unwittingly, give offence to people who are members of groups which have historically been subject to bigotry or discrimination.

2 Policy

Equal and fair treatment and protection from discrimination is a fundamental human right. The College believes that all forms of prejudice and discrimination are unacceptable. All College community members are expected to consider their behaviour and demonstrate respect for others. In recognition that these prejudices can take a variety of forms depending on the group against whom they are directed, we are setting out a standard, with discussion, for each of the protected characteristics. The College will continue to bring about practical improvements in the experience of staff and learners via the operation of a steering group which tracks and monitors actions.

2.1 Age

The College is committed to ensuring that all staff and learners are treated fairly, irrespective of their age. Age will not be a consideration in any decisions made concerning staff recruitment and selection, opportunities for promotion or training, appraisals, discipline or capability procedures or selection for redundancy. The opportunity to access education throughout life is a human right. The College shares the vision of a community in which learning plays its full role in personal growth. We will respond to demographic changes towards an ageing society and changing patterns of economic activity by taking these factors into account at curriculum reviews to the full extent that our resources allow. We will ensure that learners are on age-appropriate programmes and we will be mindful of the implications of safeguarding in these.

2.2 Disability

We recognise that disabilities take many forms, both hidden and visible and welcome the definition of disability as set out in the Equality Act 2010. The College is committed to identifying the disadvantages that disability causes and removing any consequent barriers to learning or to full participation in college life. The College is therefore committed to enabling all students and staff to access as fully as possible all educational and employment opportunities that the College provides. The College is continually focussed on its duty to provide inclusive learning and equality of opportunity for all.

2.3 Sex

Staff and learners are entitled to dignity and respect in the workplace and learning environment. We recognise that discrimination, whether direct or indirect, based on sex is unjust and it will not be tolerated. The College has used the gender equality duty to forward culture change, taking into account local concerns about the impact of our services upon people. We are mindful of wider issues relating to the gender pay gap, under-representation of women in senior posts and gender segregation in employment and are committed to promoting gender equality in all our functions.

2.4 Pregnancy and Maternity

We will not treat pregnant staff or learners less favourably or discriminate against them on the grounds of their pregnancy or maternity status.

2.5 Marriage and Civil Partnership

We will not treat staff or learners less favourably or discriminate against them on the grounds of their marital or civil partnership status.

2.6 Race

We seek to provide a learning environment in which staff and learners can develop their potential without any racial discrimination barriers. We will monitor the ethnicity of our learner intake and staff to ensure we know our college community, and can actively promote understanding and good relations between members of different ethnicities and nationalities. We encourage and expect all members of the College to evidence this commitment in their teaching and learning. As part of our commitment to monitor progress towards minimising racial discrimination and harassment we will keep a separate procedure for reporting racial incidents.

2.7 Religion and Belief

The College does not promote any particular religion or belief but welcomes religious and cultural diversity in its community and wishes to treat everyone's views with dignity and fairness. We, therefore, uphold the principle that there is a human right to freedom of thought, belief and conscience. Atheists, humanists, agnostics and those of no belief have an equal right to respect for their beliefs or absence of belief as do religious adherents. The right to manifest such thoughts and beliefs are, however, qualified by the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others.

The College acknowledges that some general holidays are based around the Christian calendar and that some holy days of other religions may coincide with timetables. Learners should inform their tutor at the beginning of their course of any request for reasonable accommodations. Staff whose recognised holy days coincide with their work should consult the Special Leave Procedure. In addition, where practicable during breaks, facilities can be booked for activities to meet the religious and cultural needs of staff and learners on the understanding that other College members are neither pressurised to join in or made to feel excluded. The College will provide a neutral Multi-Faith and Contemplation room which can be similarly booked or used on a drop-in basis for staff and learners.

2.8 Sexual Orientation

We welcome the opportunity afforded by legislation to ensure the College practices are equal and fair to all legally protected sexual orientations. We will tackle discrimination and promote equality for staff and learners, relating to policy, practice and college ethos.

2.9 Gender Reassignment

The College recognises gender differences and individuality and that there can be differences between sexes assigned at birth and gender identity. We recognise that some people may have a specific identity that they want to follow through choice. We will not discriminate against people on the grounds of gender variation at any stage in the process of gender reassignment, whether proposing to undergo, commenced, partial or complete. We will take positive steps to combat unlawful discrimination and harassment on these grounds.

In addition to the legally protected characteristics, the College also recognises equal and fair treatment and protection from discrimination for the following:

2.10 Gender Identity

Although not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, the College commits not to discriminate against anyone due to their gender identity and provides opportunity for equal access to education.

2.10 Socio-economic status

Although not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, the College commits not to discriminate against anyone due to their socio-economic background and provides opportunity for equal access to education.

2.11 Care- Experienced

Learners who are care-experienced, namely, Looked After Children (LAC), Children In Care (CIC), Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are not named as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act but the College works with external support agencies to ensure the offer caters for these groups of learners.

2.12 Academic freedom

Academic freedom is protected by law and the College encourages genuine academic debate within Higher Education. Protection of academic freedom recognises that academic staff and students have the right to explore unpopular or controversial subjects and opinions. However, in line with the Equality Act (2010), individuals are not protected by academic freedom if discriminating against or causing harassment on the grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity status, religion and belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Should such behaviours be found to occur, the College will act in line with this Equality and Diversity Policy. This should not stifle genuine academic debate in genuine academic settings or publications.

3 Implementation

3.1 Setting Targets

The College will set annual targets with clear milestones in an action plan for implementing and monitoring Equality and Diversity progress. The annual action plans will be considered and endorsed by the governing body. The impact of our Equality and Diversity initiatives will be monitored through measures such as:

- teaching and learning observations;
- feedback from learners and staff by means of surveys or other measures of attitudes and opinions;
- community monitoring by working in collaboration with local independent organisations;
- analysis of complaints and incidents arising under the racist incident procedure;
- inspection by Ofsted and other quality assurance bodies;
- staff and learner involvement participation strategies e.g. the Accessibility Focus Group for learners with disabilities;
- collecting and using data and information to evaluate Equality and Diversity progress in our provision on learner admission, retention, progress and achievement;
- analysis of recruitment and selection monitoring forms
- Mandatory EDI training for all staff updated bi-annually to reflect current government legislation and guidance

3.2 The Board of Corporation

The Board is responsible for reviewing and implementing the policy and ensuring that it complies with current statutory requirements. The Board have responsibility for ensuring that Exeter College complies with the requirements of the Equality Act including the specific duties to publish diversity data and the general public sector duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

3.3 The College

The College is responsible for achieving the highest standards in teaching and learning and we recognise that access and inclusivity is essential to this aim. Learning resources will be free from racist, sexist and any other

prejudiced assumptions, images and language and actively promote diversity. We will develop inclusive, personalised learning strategies to meet the needs of individual students and to help them to achieve their full potential. In so doing, we will take steps to develop staff in the best teaching and learning practice and to ensure that their best practice is promoted and shared.

The College is responsible for ensuring that all employment policies and practices reflect the principles of equality. Breaches of the Equality and Diversity policy can be regarded as misconduct leading to disciplinary proceedings. The College is committed to:

- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff are recognised and valued;
- a working environment that promotes dignity, fairness and respect to all;
- intolerance of all forms of intimidation, bullying or harassment;
- making training, development and progression opportunities available equitably;
- understanding that equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense;
- regular review of our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

3.4 All Staff

It is the responsibility of the whole institution of Exeter College to ensure that Equality and Diversity is at the heart of our functions and services. All staff have a responsibility to:

- fulfil our public sector duty to advance Equality and Diversity;
- challenge discriminatory incidents reporting those of an equality nature through our procedures;
- keep up to date with legislation and participate in training and learning opportunities including the mandatory training offered by the College, Equality and Diversity Essentials;
- reflect the values, principles and standards described in this policy in all our College activities
- In addition to these general responsibilities the faculties, boards, departments or individuals have a requirement to carry out their specific Equality and Diversity roles and responsibilities so that the whole organisation's mission is achieved.

3.5 Partners and procurement

The College, in its work in partnership with institutions, charities, local communities and their representatives, suppliers, contractors and partners in education and training will promote good practice and relations between groups by placing Equality and Diversity at the heart of its interactions.

4 Associated Documentation

4.1 College publications

Policies, procedures and codes, particularly those generated by the departments of People and Performance and Student Experience

4.2 Legislation

- Children Act 2004
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998

4.3 Guidance

- Guidance for Schools and Colleges : Gender Questioning Children 19 December 2023
- Provisions to support gender-questioning children in school 29 April 2024

5 Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

- 5.1 The policy and any subsequent versions of it will be formally adopted on behalf of the College, subject to recommendations of the Senior Leadership Team, by the Board to the Corporation.
- 5.2 This policy is fully endorsed by the Board of Corporation, senior management and has been agreed with trade unions.
- 5.3 The Quality and Compliance Manager will oversee maintenance, review and monitoring of the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 5.4 Copies of this policy and associated documents are available from the College portal and website. The definitive version of the policy is stored in the [College Leadership SharePoint Site](#)
- 5.5 This policy will be reviewed in line with changes in legislation or best practice, or every two years, whichever is the sooner.