



## **Equal Opportunities Policy**

**Areas covered:**

Equal Opportunities and Fair Assessment Policy

Disability and Equality Strategy: A Policy Statement for Employees and Students

Disability Policy

## **Equal Opportunities and Fair Assessment Policy**

### **Aim**

To ensure that the assessment system and practices do not limit or discriminate against individuals on the grounds of colour, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability.

The Youth Development Academy will act against any possible discriminatory or biased practices and will positively promote access to learning and assessment.

In order to do this the Academy will in its recruitment of staff and learners ensure:

- that all its marketing materials display positive images of different ethnic minority groups and people with different abilities and disabilities and people of different ages and gender;
- that all advertising does not directly or indirectly discriminate against anyone, except where legal requirements make this necessary;
- that advertising targets all groups and types of people, as much as reasonably possible;
- that all recruitment of staff and students complies with legal requirements and that our practice and decisions are fair and consistent;
- that all staff has access to employment opportunities, training and information regardless of their age, sex, colour, creed, race, religion, sexual orientation or beliefs;
- that all our staff will abide by the equal opportunities requirements of the Joint Awarding Organisations and QCA.

### **Equal opportunities in the learning provision**

The Youth Development Academy's aim is to provide a framework which promotes equal opportunities for those who have special needs arising from race, gender, religion, disability or learning disability. In adhering to this philosophy, it is intended to make the following provisions through course delivery:

- Learners will be made aware of the precise requirements for every qualification and course at induction. Registration of students does not occur until after induction, therefore Learners will not be penalised if they decide to opt out of the course.
- Learning by any method, including open and distance learning, will be made available.

- All Learners will have the opportunity to undergo a diagnostic test to ascertain the need for additional learning support.
- No upper or lower age limits will be specified, other than that published by the awarding Organisation for assessment and award of a qualification.
- Any Learner with special needs will be strongly encouraged to pursue units of competence in which they have a reasonable chance of attaining the required standard. The Academy assessment staff will support those who require assistance in obtaining appropriate learning opportunities and assistance.
- Any discriminatory or unfair behaviour displayed by Learners towards other learners or staff will not be tolerated. Such behaviour will result in the Learner being asked to leave the course and, if relevant, their employer being informed.
- Curriculum delivery and learning materials will not discriminate against any person or group.

### **Special provision for Learners with special needs**

The Youth Development Academy believes that all Learners should be supported in their learning, despite any special needs they may have.

#### **Special needs could include the following:**

- Learners with physical impairments e.g.: Wheelchair bound, deaf, blind;
- People at the extremes of the workforce age group;
- People who have not studied for a while;
- Learners with dyslexia and other learning difficulties;
- Learners who lack confidence;
- Learners with special needs and requirements will be supported by their Assessor, Mentor and Internal Verifier or Tutor;
- Learners who cannot/have difficulty with writing can be supported to complete their course through dictation or oral tapes or receive basic skills tutoring and support by referral to a selected basic skills co-coordinator;
- Learners with dyslexia, physical impairments or learning difficulties may be allowed more time to complete their course than the usual timescale according to the regulations of the Awarding Organisation.

Referrals to specialist help and support organisations will be arranged as appropriate. Learners who require it can be provided with handbooks and centre

information on tape.

- We will do our utmost to enable Learners who work part time or nights to obtain their qualification by providing opportunities for assessment through the employment of Assessors who can work flexible hours.
- Where possible, the Academy offers Learners the opportunity to attend alternative study days to enable greater access to learning, when it may otherwise be difficult i.e. because of working hours or children to consider.
- All Learners will be made aware of, and have access to, the centre appeals procedure.
- Learners can appeal against any practice that they feel is unfair through the centre appeals procedure.

#### **Anti-discriminatory guidance for Assessors and assessment staff**

- Where evidence collection includes observation of the Learner's working relationships, the Assessor's role is explained clearly and accurately and, where practical, the consent of others is obtained.
- Arrangements for maintaining the confidentiality of evidence are agreed with the Learner and others affected. Work products and photographs can be used as evidence if permission of those affected is obtained in writing.
- Appropriate arrangements are made to maximise access for Learners regardless of their age, race, class, creed, culture, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or any other factors which result in unfair discrimination.
- Cases are reported promptly to the Lead Internal Verifier when the evidence gathering method is found to be discriminatory in any way.
- Learners who disagree with the assessment decision are given accurate and timely advice on how to appeal.
- Information and advice is provided in a manner which respects the dignity of the Learner and the confidentiality of the assessment process.
- The Academy Management and Lead Internal Verifiers are responsible for ensuring access to fair assessment by providing guidance and support to Assessors to ensure discrimination does not occur either intentionally or inadvertently and make sure that assessment methods do not introduce requirements that are not included in the national standard.
- All Assessors and Internal Verifiers will be regularly appraised to ensure that

discriminatory practice is discouraged at all times.

- If in doubt of any issue relating to Equal Opportunities the Academy will seek the appropriate expert advice to ensure practice is fair and meets legal requirements.
- No staff member will discriminate, or treat any other person unfairly, at any time. Any such occurrences will not be tolerated and will be treated very seriously under the disciplinary procedure.
- Should any staff member be witness to, or be aware of, any behaviour or practice which they believe to be unfair or discriminatory must report the concerns immediately.

### **Monitoring and review of equal opportunities**

- All staff, students and applicants will be asked to complete an anonymous equal opportunities questionnaire. These will be audited to monitor recruitment practices.
- Learners' completion rates will be audited to identify any shortfalls in our service provision in order to make any necessary improvements.
- The Academy will actively encourage staff to provide feedback on practice and make recommendations for improvements through regular staff meetings and established communication channels.
- The Academy will regularly review all policies, marketing material, activities and training materials to ensure they are up to date and comply with good practice, and legal requirements.
- The Academy will actively seek feedback from Learners on the training provision and the meeting of special needs through course evaluations, which will be monitored, and audited.

The Academy will keep up to date with any changes in best practice and ensure that necessary changes are made to meet these standards

- The Academy is strictly monitored by the awarding organisations and will, always comply with their policies and requirements.
- The Academy will regularly self-evaluate practice and make any necessary improvements or changes to service delivery.

### **Review and Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed, evaluated and updated annually to constantly improve fair access and assessment practice and equal opportunities for all people affected by it.

## **2. Disability and Equality Strategy: A Policy Statement for Employees and Students**

### **Introduction:**

The Youth Development Academy is committed to developing a first class working environment for its employees and educational environment for its students. Any kind of disability or long-term illness is considered a serious issue and employees and students with disabilities are treated fairly and equally in the organization. As an equal opportunities employer the Academy is committed to:

- Promote a constructive organisational atmosphere where all people can work and learn with dignity and in an independent manner;
- Provide continuous support for people with special needs;
- Establish and maintain “Best Practice” on disability issues.

### **Aims**

Disability is seen as a sensitive issue and the Academy will work to actively remove the many social barriers which hinder the growth of disabled people.

This policy for disabled people has been devised by keeping in view the following aims of the organisation:

- There is no discrimination on the bases of race, religion, colour or disability.
- Equality of opportunity is assured in all areas in The Youth Development Academy.
- Individual needs for disabled people are assessed and an appropriate environment and role is offered according to the need and ability.
- The employees with disabilities are treated as active members of the organisation and their involvement in the decision-making is ensured.
- The disability services/programme is integrated in all organisational procedures, is not treated separately.
- All the employees and students with any kind of disability are treated fairly and progress in their career/studies.

The Academy focuses on “Becoming the Employer of Choice”. This can be done by establishing good practice in the organisation and creating entry channels for people with special requirements from different backgrounds and diverse experiences.

### 3. Disability Policy

**Definition of Disability:** For the purposes of the defining the term, a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The Youth Development Academy acknowledges that a person is more likely to be disadvantaged by social and environmental factors than by a disability itself. Disability in this context can include a wide range of issues and conditions. Typically, this would be one, or combination of, the following categories:

- Specific learning difficulty - e.g. dyslexia
- Visual impairment - partial sight or blind
- Hearing loss - partial hearing or profoundly deaf
- Mobility difficulties or wheelchair user
- Has restricted use of upper limbs
- Mental health problems
- Condition that is not visible, e.g. epilepsy, sickle cell anaemia, HIV
- Condition not listed above (e.g. back injury)

The above list should not be seen as exhaustive. If an employee or student feels they have a condition that is affecting the ability to study effectively, the Academy Student Welfare Office should be contacted. They will provide support on disability and learning difficulties.

#### **The Youth Development Academy context**

The Youth Development Academy's is committed to a policy of equal opportunities for disabled people and is working towards creating an environment in which all individuals are able to participate fully in the academic and social life of the Academy. It is recognised that 'disability' covers a wide range of impairments. Different disabilities will have varying impacts on study, work and other aspects of life. Individuals may join The Youth Development Academy with a disability or become disabled during their time at Academy. Some individuals may be disabled temporarily by accident or illness.



## **Policy Statement**

The Youth Development Academy policy is to comply with the statutory obligations in a positive manner. The Academy recognises that it has clear obligations to take all reasonable steps to enable people with disabilities to share in the opportunities available to all its students. The Youth Development Academy strives to identify barriers and obstacles which exist for disabled people and to work towards their removal. All students will be provided with the opportunity to identify themselves as having a disability on application to a programme of study and annually at registration. Applications for admission from potential students will be assessed primarily on the basis of the applicants' aptitudes, abilities and qualifications.

Students who identify themselves as having a disability will be provided with access to the appropriate advice, support and adaptations to remove barriers and obstacles and enable them to be fully included in the life of The Youth Development Academy. All students with a disability will be offered the opportunity to have their study and support needs assessed by the authorised disability assessment centres and appropriate facilities will be provided. Students' views will be taken into account at all times during assessment of their needs.

The Youth Development Academy will take all reasonable steps to ensure that programmes and assessments are organised in ways which offer disabled students the best possible opportunities for equal participation and demonstration of learning outcomes. The Youth Development Academy will also take reasonable steps to enable students who become disabled during their time at The Youth Development Academy to continue in their course of study. As far as is reasonably practicable, and within the constraints of existing buildings; The Youth Development Academy will ensure that premises are accessible and at all times safe for disabled students.

Members of staff will have access to appropriate information and advice, and are strongly encouraged to participate in staff development opportunities to develop awareness of disability and equality issues.

## **Confidentiality**

Information that is disclosed to staff in the Student Welfare Office about your disability will generally only be shared with other staff where you give written explicit consent and only to the extent that this is necessary to put support in place and make the reasonable adjustments required.

Only the required adjustments, and not the nature of the disability, will be communicated to others; and if there is no requirement for any adjustments and the learner does not wish staff to be made aware of the disability, then there would be no need to communicate to others any information disclosed.

Only in exceptional circumstances (for example, if there is risk to others) would it be necessary to disclose to others within and outside of the Academy details of the disability without explicit consent. Should a situation like this occur, reasonable steps would be taken to seek permission from the learner where practicable before any information is shared.

Disability data will be used on an anonymised basis for the Academy's equal opportunities monitoring requirements and will be included in the completion of data compilation.

## **Disclosure**

Learners will be asked to disclose any disabilities and invited to discuss related needs when applying to The Youth Development Academy and registering as a student. This will be handled in a secure and sensitive way.

Listings of applicants and students who have disclosed disabilities are prepared for staff with designated responsibilities for disabled students so they can contact the learner to discuss any specific adjustments required.

The Youth Development Academy will take proactive steps to promote the work of the Disability Services Team to all students, however it is the learner's responsibility to make contact with the Academy Disability Adviser (in the Disability Services Team) to discuss support or adjustments.

The Disability Adviser will refer the learner to the relevant Disability Assessment Centres, which will specify the adjustments required and will provide the necessary devices or services within its constraints. The learner will be asked in that context to sign a Disability Disclosure Statement to specify the level of disclosure agreed.

Whilst it is the learner's responsibility to decide what the Academy knows about the disability, for some students who are undertaking programmes of study in professional disciplines, disclosure is a requirement of the accrediting professional body which provides a statutory licence to practise and the Academy must comply with this requirement. It is therefore important that all such applicants and students respond fully to the disclosure request. If the learner chooses not to disclose your disability during admissions or registration the learner can still disclose subsequently at any stage.

## **Staff Awareness**

Apart from your disclosure, staff may become aware of a learner's disability in other ways such as academic references, during open days, when advice is sought or in casual conversation with staff.

In such circumstances, learners are encouraged to contact designated staff to discuss any support and adjustments might be useful to you. With consent staff can also inform an appropriate member of staff in Disability Services Team and ask them to contact the learner.

## **Student Welfare Office / Disability Services Team**

The Student Welfare Officer provides advice and guidance for students with physical difficulties, sensory impairments, chronic (long-term) medical conditions or specific learning difficulties and refers learners to accredited assessment centres.

The disability support service provided by the Student Welfare Office includes, but is not restricted to, special arrangements for assessments, liaison with tutors and needs assessments for students applying for support through the Disabled Students Allowance. Student scholarships and other funding bodies requires that students applying for Disabled Students' Allowance are assessed for their support at an accredited centre.

## **Facilities and Support**

The Academy provides an inclusive service for all students. Advice and ongoing support is also provided through a variety of services, including:

- Scheduling classes in rooms that are appropriate for students' needs and providing additional lecture and tutorial hours
- The provision of teaching and learning materials when tutors are aware of needs.

## **Financial Support**

### **Disabled Students' Allowances**

The Disabled Students' Allowance is a non-means-tested grant which helps to fund the extra costs a student with a disability, long term medical condition, sensory impairment, physical difficulty, or specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia) may have when attending their course.

To be eligible learners must be on a full-time higher education course.

If learners wish to apply for a scholarship, please speak to the principal or the student welfare officer.

### Further Information

Learners can discuss any concerns about disclosure of your disability with any member of the Academy Disability Services.

### Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or if there is a change in legal or other business related requirement.

Review date	Description	Reviewed by	Next Review date
16 July 2019	Equal Opportunities & Fair Assessment, Disability Policy	SMT Team	14 July 2020
10 July 2020		SMT Team	12 July 2021
07 July 2021		SMT Team	06 July 2022
05 July 2022		SMT Team	08 July 2023
09 July 2023		SMT Team	10 July 2024
04 July 2024		SMT Team	07 July 2025