



**BRIDGWATER  
& TAUNTON  
COLLEGE**

# **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY**

Applicable to staff, students, customers and the general public using  
Bridgwater and Taunton College from 1 January 2022

# EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

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## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Equality & Diversity policy demonstrates the commitment of the College to equality of opportunity for staff, students and other people and sets out our equality principles.
- 1.2 Equality of opportunity is an important aspect of College life because we want to create an environment in which everyone is able to achieve their potential as citizens in a globalised world, and the College celebrates the diversity of its community and the wider national and international environment.
- 1.3 We strive to ensure that the College environment is free of harassment and bullying and that there is respect for the dignity and worth of each individual at all times
- 1.5 The period continues to be dominated by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the College recognises that social factors are a determinant of the levels of the infection, and that therefore black and minority ethnic groups may have a higher incidence of the virus.
- 1.6 New concerns came to light over the preceding year about sexual harassment in education. The College will strive to create a culture of zero tolerance towards sexual harassment and will seek to provide exemplary support for its victims. A separate action plan is in place to ensure the appropriate response.
- 1.6 Our College Values set out how we work and behave. Together we are:
  - Passionate and excited about learning
  - Inclusive and supportive
  - Responsive to learner, employer and community needs
  - Always aspiring to the highest standards
  - Professional and enterprising
  - Innovative and creative
  - Friendly and welcoming

### **2. PURPOSE**

- 2.1 The College is fully committed to promoting, maintaining and supporting equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. The College aims to create an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, and gain a feeling of self-esteem and respect for and from all others. The College expresses its opposition to all forms of inequality and discrimination.
- 2.2 The College has statutory duties under UK law to promote equality of opportunity between people of different groups. Full details of the statutory duties are available in the Single Equality Scheme.
- 2.3 This policy assists the College to put its commitment into practice. Staff adherence to this policy should ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination or inequality.

### **3. SCOPE**

3.1 This policy applies to staff, students, employers, customers and suppliers. It applies to anyone who uses the College at any point in time, including students based in the workplace and students and staff working online or remotely. Everyone should expect to be treated equally according to need, with dignity and respect and without being subjected to discrimination or harassment.

#### **4. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY AT BRIDGWATER & TAUNTON COLLEGE**

4.1 Bridgwater and Taunton College works positively and progressively to ensure that no policy, practice, procedure or action puts any group of people at an unfair advantage or supports discrimination.

4.2 In particular the College acknowledges that it is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly against employees and potential employees, students and potential students, and any other stakeholders of the College, who have one or more of the nine 'protected characteristics' defined in the Equality Act 2010.

4.3 The 9 protected characteristics are:

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

4.4 Bridgwater and Taunton College will not tolerate any acts of unlawful discrimination by any users of the College and will take appropriate action, as laid down in its policies and procedures, if it is made aware that an unlawful act, or possible unlawful act, has been committed.

There are limited circumstances, referred to as 'Genuine Occupational Qualification', when an employer such as the College can, in certain circumstances, advertise for and recruit a person from a particular protected characteristic because of the particular requirements of a specific job role. For example, a female Learning Support Assistant may be recruited to support female students with personal care needs.

The categories of discrimination as listed in the Equality Act 2010 are:

##### **i) Direct discrimination**

Where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

##### **ii) Indirect discrimination**

Where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

##### **iii) Harassment**

Where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may apply either directly or indirectly to customers, clients, staff or students because of one of the protected characteristics

**iv) Associative discrimination**

Where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

**v) Perceptive discrimination**

Where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

**vi) Victimisation**

Where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he or she is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if he or she acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint

- 4.4.1 The protected characteristics of marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity are not currently covered in the areas of:
- Harassment
  - Associative discrimination
  - Perceptive discrimination
- 4.5 College staff will not discriminate or harass a customer or member of the public in the provision of goods, facilities or services.
- 4.6 We will make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. A reasonable adjustment may include the removal, adaption or alteration of physical features (as long as this is not unreasonably difficult).
- 4.7 Staff who feel they have experienced harassment or bullying by students, customers, suppliers, or visitors should notify their manager, or if this is not possible, speak to HR. Students who have experienced harassment should speak to their Personal Tutor or any Safeguarding Officer.
- 4.8 Promoting equality of opportunity is important at Bridgwater and Taunton College and integrated into all activities undertaken within the College, from Strategic and Operational Planning, development, delivery and assessment of curriculum, and recruitment and employment of staff. We also ensure equality of opportunity is an integral part of new ventures, such as design and build of new facilities and engagement of contractors.
- 4.9 The College will continue with Race as the Single Equality Objective for the period 2020-24 and will incorporate Black Lives Matter into this objective.
- 4.10 The College is committed to seeking to reduce any gender pay gap and will report on progress towards this annually.

- 4.11 The College and University Centre Somerset have adopted, and fully support, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism:

*'Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities'*

The College also confirms that it has zero tolerance towards discrimination or hatred directed at all other faiths.

- 4.12 The College also seeks to raise awareness of the nine protected characteristics and will seek opportunities to widen awareness, and celebrate the diversity, of the College community and wider world.
- 4.13 The Equality and Diversity agenda is progressed at the College principally through the Equality & Diversity Committee (Link Governor, Staff and Students). Other focus groups for Protected Characteristics groups are held from time to time and students run an active LGBT+ group.

## **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 5.1 All members of the College community have a responsibility to work towards equality of opportunity for all the protected characteristics, by ensuring equal opportunities and valuing the diversity of others.
- 5.2 All staff have a responsibility to work co-operatively with others at all times. Individual members of staff can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the College for any act of unlawful discrimination. Staff who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against others are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the College's disciplinary policy. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or harassment may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

Specific responsibilities for Equality & Diversity are set out for groups of staff:

- **Governors** will ensure that the College meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- **The Senior Management Team** will lead by example, demonstrate the principles of equality & diversity and seek good practice from managers and staff across the College and specifically within their Area
- **Managers** will establish good working relationships with all staff within their teams and respond to any issues that arise in terms of staff or student concerns. Managers will manage staff in an equal, fair and appropriate way to ensure no form of favouritism, discrimination or unfair advantage is permitted
- **Human Resources** will ensure that procedures for the recruitment and promotion of staff encompass best practice at all times within equal opportunities legislative requirements, monitor and act on employee protected characteristics data, and provide equality and diversity training for staff
- **Teaching and training staff** will demonstrate the principles of equality & diversity and how we are fair and supportive to all people, irrespective of who they are. Teaching and training staff will deliver materials to students which

avoid stereotyping or discrimination and embed equality & diversity into their lessons.

- **Staff** will work harmoniously with all other staff, students, customers and other people and uphold the high standards expected of equality & diversity. Staff will report any concerns about equality issues so that action can be taken to ensure a supportive environment for staff, students and other people.
- **The Student Union** will seek to raise awareness of diversity among students and reduce or remove all forms of discrimination.
- **Students** of the College are expected to adhere to the Student Charter and Code of Conduct, which seeks mutual respect for all and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs, and offers students' equality of opportunity regardless of protected characteristics

5.3 It is a specific responsibility of the College Equality and Diversity Committee, made up of the link governor for Equality and Diversity, staff from all areas of the College, student representation from the Student Union and chaired by the Director of Student Services, to ensure that the Equality and Diversity Action Plan is revised annually and all actions monitored towards implementation during the College year

5.4 This Action Plan aims to broaden awareness of issues and ensure good practice in everything we do, and meet the requirements of the Single Equality Scheme. The Director of Student Services reports on progress against the Action Plan to SMT and the Standards Committee of the College Governors.

## 6. **EQUALITY STATEMENTS**

6.1 Bridgwater and Taunton College promotes equality of opportunity to all staff and students in accordance with current legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, and will continue to review and amend this policy and our practices as required under legislation and case law.

6.2 Bridgwater and Taunton College believes in equality of opportunity in all its activities including the delivery of education and training, projects, employment and recruitment.

6.3 Wherever practicable the College will accommodate cultural and religious needs of students and staff within the constraints of operational requirements.

6.4 The University Centre Somerset will be supported to implement the aims of its Access and Participation Plan, which seeks to support under-represented groups into Higher Education.

## 7. **INDUCTION & STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

7.1 Bridgwater and Taunton College will provide a range of CPD (continuing professional development) activities to staff and managers both at induction and during employment to ensure equality and diversity is central to their understanding of workplace activities and people management.

7.2 Sexual harassment in education training and awareness activities will be developed for students and staff during the year.

7.3 Bridgwater and Taunton College provides equality & diversity e-learning for all staff and has the expectation that all staff complete the e-learning course within the first six months of employment, in order to pass through the Induction Review process.

7.3 Further training in learning support and disability awareness is sourced for specific teams.

## 8. RECRUITMENT

### 8.1 RECRUITMENT OF STAFF

8.1.1 We recruit our staff from a variety of labour markets including local, regional, national and international communities. We have a range of methods for doing this including advertising in newspapers, noticeboards, specific journals, the internet and job centre plus.

8.1.2 We undertake equality monitoring on the protected characteristics to allow us to understand who our candidates are and which candidates progress to interview and job offer and to enable us to identify if there are any areas of concern within our recruitment processes which prevent or discourage candidates from any particular protected characteristic from applying or progressing through our recruitment process.

8.1.3 We hold the Disability Confident Standard and have identified a disability officer as a first point of call for staff with disabilities. We liaise with the Access to Work Scheme, run by the Job Centre Plus service to identify, fund and seek specialist equipment for staff to ensure they can gain a job irrespective of if they have a disability or develop a disability during their working life with us.

8.1.4 The College has a separate DBS and Rehabilitation of Offenders' Policy to support ex-offenders to fulfil an active part in society and move on with their lives after previous difficult times. We talk to our existing staff or new staff about any convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings they have ever received as part of recruitment and induction processes.

### 8.2 RECRUITMENT OF STUDENTS

8.2.1 We welcome student applications from all areas of the local, regional, national and international community. The Information, Advice and Guidance process enables students to select a course, suited to their level of ability and future aspirations, taking into account the relevant government funding stream, where appropriate.

8.2.2 Many students join us from the local secondary schools, while others have a particular interest in following a discrete area of provision and travel many miles to study with us (e.g. for Land-based studies or as a Residential student).

8.2.3 We undertake equality monitoring and analysis on the protected characteristics that we collect from our students to allow us to understand who our students are and how they have progressed throughout their studies. We will seek to increase the number of protected characteristics on which we collect data during the life of this policy.

8.2.4 We arrange appropriate learning support for our students who have learning difficulties and disabilities and who need tailored additional support in order to succeed in their studies.



- 8.2.5 We have been awarded the Highly Trusted Sponsor status, from UK Border Agency and therefore we take student applications from international communities. We have links with several countries across the world and work with the British Council and UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) to ensure international students join us in line with all relevant legislation.
- 8.2.6 A Fitness to Study Procedure seeks to treat students with criminal records fairly and rehabilitate them into education where it is safe to do so.
- 8.2.7 We work with our Student Union Equality and Diversity Officer to discuss how we can further support students from different backgrounds or with differing needs to good effect.

## 9. EQUALITY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

- 9.1 We recognise that teaching, training and learning support staff have an important role to play in embedding equality & diversity into their lessons and tutorials. We run training sessions for staff on how to embed equality and diversity into lessons and materials and what behaviour on equality and diversity is appropriate in lessons.
- 9.2 Teaching, training and support staff are encouraged to deal with issues as they arise in lessons and to tackle prejudice, stereotyping, banter and negative behaviours about one or more minority groups (e.g. BME people, disabled people, immigrants, homosexual and transgender people and sexual banter and harassment).
- 9.3 Staff and governors are encouraged to undertake equality training during their employment, provided either by College staff or external trainers
- 9.4 All new staff, as part of their induction, complete an equality & diversity e-learning package, as referred to in section 7.2
- 9.5 Bridgwater and Taunton College has a clear expectation of the standard of working with staff, students and external individuals harmoniously with respect for everyone's needs and characteristics.

## 10. REVIEW OF POLICY

- 10.1 The Equality & Diversity Policy is reviewed in line with legislative changes and case law and is also formally reviewed on an annual basis.
- 10.2 The annual process used to review the policy is as follows:
- The Director of Student Services and Head of Human Resources will review changes required
  - The amended policy will be presented to the Equality & Diversity Committee at an appropriate meeting for comment and consultation
  - SMT will review the draft policy
  - Governors will ratify the Policy at Full Board
  - The final policy will be published and communicated to all staff.