



Equality & Diversity Policy

1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 combined more than 116 pieces of equality legislation into one Act, providing a legal framework which tackles discrimination in respect of the following personal characteristics, which are protected by the law:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- race;
- religion or belief (there are some education exceptions where there is valid segregation);
- sex (there are some education exceptions where there is valid segregation);
- sexual orientation;
- pregnancy and maternity.

It defines the behaviour that is unlawful under the Act as:

- direct discrimination;
- indirect discrimination;
- discrimination arising from disability;
- victimisation;
- harassment.

Section 53 of the Act refers specifically to awarding organisations, requiring them not to discriminate, harass or victimise a person in relation to the conferment or withdrawal of a qualification.

1.1. Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out VTCT's commitment to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and to the principles of equality and diversity both as an employer and in the development, delivery and awarding of qualifications.

It should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Appeals policy and procedures;
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration policy and procedures.

1.2. Scope of the policy This policy is provided for VTCT's employees, approved centres and learners using VTCT or ITEC products and services.

1.3. Responsibilities

VTCT is responsible for ensuring that its staff and contractors are aware of this policy, current equality legislation and regulatory requirements in relation to equality and diversity (see appendix). The centre head is responsible for ensuring that its staff and learners are aware of this policy, current equality legislation and regulatory requirements in relation to equality and diversity (see appendix).

1.4. Regulatory authorities This policy addresses the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities' criteria.

1.5. Review arrangements This policy is reviewed annually as part of VTCT's self-evaluation activity, which includes consideration of customer and regulatory feedback and good practice guidance. A policy review may also be triggered as an action resulting from the outcome of the investigation of a complaint.

2. Policy Statement

VTCT:

- is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in employment and access to services for all who work for or with it;
- values and celebrates differences in age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity;
- believes that all forms of prejudice and discrimination are unacceptable, and will strive vigorously to tackle these and to remove conditions which place people at a disadvantage;
- works to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination;
- provides equality of opportunity as an integral part of good practice;
- is committed to a working environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully recognised and valued;
- supports staff and contractors in challenging any inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour from colleagues, other individuals, organisations and customers.

3. Staff and contractors

VTCT is committed to ensuring that personnel are recruited, selected, monitored and can progress within the organisation in a fair and equitable manner, based on their relevant attributes, skills, experience and performance only.

VTCT provides equality and diversity guidance to all staff and external contractors at induction and on an ongoing basis.

4. Qualifications

VTCT ensures that:

- its qualifications are suitable for as diverse a range of learners as possible;
- it adheres to regulatory conditions relating to the development, delivery, assessment and awarding of ITEC and VTCT qualifications, to ensure that qualifications contain no bias in content which might discriminate against or disadvantage any groups of learners sharing a particular characteristic, in terms of language, content or means of assessment, other than those directly related to the purpose of the units or qualifications;
- if any such features or barriers of this type are necessary, their nature and the reason for their inclusion in the particular unit or qualification are clearly set out. Staff responsible for inducting learners on to qualifications must be fully briefed of such features.

New qualifications put forward for approval are scrutinised for the above before they are added to the portfolio.

5. Centres

VTCT ensures equality of opportunity for learners registered on its qualifications by requiring centres to demonstrate as part of the approval process that:

- current equality legislation is adhered to;
- there is an up-to-date equality and diversity policy in place;
- staff and learners are aware of and have access to the equality and diversity policy;
- assessment processes are carried out in a fair and objective manner;
- an effective appeals policy and procedure is in place;
- staff and learners are aware of and have access to the appeals policy and procedure;
- candidates' results are monitored in line with the centre's equality and diversity policy;
- equipment and accommodation used for learning and assessment create no barriers to access for any candidate;
- reasonable adjustments and special consideration are made in line with VTCT's policy and procedures.