

Equality and Diversity Policy

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**Policies will be reviewed more frequently if legal changes or good practice require*

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Related policies/documents:

Student Anti-Bullying Policy;
Family Friendly Policy;
Student Disciplinary Procedure;
Staff Disciplinary Procedure;
Dignity at Work Policy;
Academic Misconduct Policy; and
Additional Learning Support Policy.

1. Policy Statement

North Kent College (“the College”) is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and to diversity in everything it does. The College embraces diversity and will seek to promote the benefits of diversity in all of its activities. The College will seek to develop a culture that reflects that belief.

The College will seek to widen the mediums in which it recruits to ensure as diverse as possible employee and candidate base and acknowledges the duty of further and higher education in promoting equality of opportunity and furthering social inclusion.

The College takes positive steps to ensure that all current and prospective employees are not discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of gender, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, creed/religion, ethnic or national origin and social background. The College values the differences, needs and contributions a diverse workforce and customer base represents.

The College places an obligation upon its entire staff to respect and act in accordance with this policy. The College is committed to providing equality and diversity training for all our staff.

The College extends this positive attitude in respect of equality and diversity to its contractors, students and the community.

The College will be an equality and diversity champion and leader in:

- 1.1 promoting equality and diversity;
- 1.2 challenging and eradicating discrimination; and
- 1.3 providing responsive and accessible services.

Within the overall framework of its statement of purpose and values, the College is committed to the principle and practice of equal opportunities and celebrates the diversity of people. The College understands that these two concepts are not the same but are complementary. Without recognising and, most importantly, valuing differences between people, there cannot be true equality of opportunity. Moreover the College promotes individual life-enhancing opportunities that respect all people.

This document sets out the Equality and Diversity Policy of the College. It explains why equality and diversity are important to it, the basic principles it will follow and how it intends to monitor and achieve its progress.

2. Introduction

It is the responsibility of every student, member of staff, contractor and visitor to make sure they do not unlawfully discriminate and/or harass in any way. Each has a duty for owning and implementing this Equality and Diversity Policy.

All job applicants, staff and students will be informed of the College's commitment to equality and valuing diversity and the Equality and Diversity Policy will be made available on request.

3. Scope

This policy describes the college policy on equality and diversity in relation to marketing, publicity and school liaison, access and environment, curriculum, teaching and learning, staffing, including recruitment and selection and professional development.

The categories of people covered by this policy are:

- 3.1 prospective students and staff (in relation to admissions and recruitment arrangements);
- 3.2 current students and staff;
- 3.3 former students and staff (if there is a continuing relationship based on them having been a student or member of staff at the College); and
- 3.4 visitors, contractors and service providers (while they are on College premises or carrying out College business).

Other related policies include the Student Bullying Policy, Family friendly policy Student and Staff Disciplinary Policies, Dignity at Work Policy, Academic Misconduct Policy, and the Additional Learning Support Policy.

North Kent College recognises that many individuals and protected groups experience unlawful discrimination and disadvantage on the grounds of their:

- 3.5 race;
- 3.6 disability;
- 3.7 gender;
- 3.8 sexual orientation;
- 3.9 religion or belief;
- 3.10 age;

- 3.11 gender re-assignment;
- 3.12 marriage or civil partnership status;
- 3.13 pregnancy and maternity;
- 3.14 caring responsibilities;
- 3.15 offending background; and/or
- 3.16 socio-economic group.

The College believes that equality for all is a basic human right and actively opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. It values and celebrates the diversity in society and is striving to promote and reflect that diversity within the College. This policy sets out how the College will meet and, in some cases, exceed the legal requirements shared in the Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”).

4. Definitions

4.1. Discrimination

The College will not accept behaviour towards people which results in them being treated worse or less favourably than others are being treated because of a protected characteristic.

4.2. Harassment

The College will not accept behaviour towards people which is offensive; might threaten their security; creates an intimidating or hostile environment which could hinder their performance; and/or affect their personal well-being.

4.3. Victimisation

The College will not accept one person treating another badly because s/he in good faith has taken or supported any action under the Act.

4.4. Protected Characteristics

The following characteristics are “protected characteristics” under the Equality Act 2010 for Further and Higher Education institutions:

4.4.1 Age;

4.4.2 Disability;

- 4.4.3 Gender Reassignment;
- 4.4.4 Pregnancy and maternity;
- 4.4.5 Race;
- 4.4.6 Religion or Belief;
- 4.4.7 Sex;
- 4.4.8 Sexual Orientation; and
- 4.4.9 Marriage and civil partnerships (this is a protected characteristic for employment purposes only, in Further and Higher Education).

All alleged incidents of discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation will be dealt with according to the College's harassment/bullying policies and disciplinary procedures.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. Governors

The College's Governors will be responsible for:

- 5.1.1 ensuring the College meets all its duties under the legislation;
- 5.1.2 ensuring that the Equality Act 2010 is followed; and
- 5.1.3 receiving and approving monitoring reports on the policy through the Equality and Diversity Annual Report.

5.2. The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- 5.2.1 giving a consistent and high profile lead on all equality issues;
- 5.2.2 promoting the equality policy both internally and externally; and
- 5.2.3 making sure the Equality Policy and its procedures are followed.

5.3. The College Senior Leadership Team

The College Senior Leadership Team ("SLT") is responsible for:

- 5.3.1 putting the policy into practice;

- 5.3.2 making sure all the staff know their responsibilities and receive support and training to carry these out;
- 5.3.3 taking action against staff or students who discriminate, harass or victimise others for reasons of race; disability; gender; sexual orientation; religion or belief; age; gender re-assignment; maternity and paternity; and/or marriage or civil partnership; and
- 5.3.4 building equality into their own area of work and consider setting equality targets where appropriate.

5.4. The Equality and Diversity Committee

The Equality and Diversity Committee is responsible for:

- 5.4.1 the implementation and monitoring of this Policy; and
- 5.4.2 ensuring that other organisations working on behalf of College work according to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

5.5. All staff

All members of staff are responsible for:

- 5.5.1 advancing equality of opportunity;
- 5.5.2 operating within this policy at all times;
- 5.5.3 challenging inappropriate language and behaviours; and
- 5.5.4 completing mandatory equality and diversity training.

5.6. Teaching Staff

Teaching staff are responsible for:

- 5.6.1 promoting equality and diversity through their teaching programmes and through relations with students, staff and the wider community;
- 5.6.2 ensuring that the curriculum covers the knowledge, skills and values which students need to tackle discrimination when they meet it and help them to understand and value diversity; and
- 5.6.3 ensuring that course materials are accessible to a range of students and adjusted to meet specific needs.

5.7. Students

Students are responsible for:

5.7.1 following the Equality Policy at all times; and

5.7.2 behaving in a manner that advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

5.8. Contractors and Service Providers

All contractors and service providers are responsible for:

5.8.1 following the Equality Act 2010 and any equality conditions in contracts and/or agreements.

All staff and students have a duty to observe this policy and the requirements of the Equality Act (2010). Any reported breaches will be investigated through the relevant staff or student procedure and may result in disciplinary action being taken.

6. **Marketing, Publicity and External Liaison**

The College will research the needs of prospective students in our local schools and wider community and attempt to respond to those needs in terms of course provision and support. College publicity and learner recruitment process will be designed to encourage applications from all sections of the community. The College will make publicity and marketing information available in a range of accessible formats for current and prospective students. All publicity and information will take into account equal opportunities for staff and students. Publicity materials will offer guidance on how to apply for financial assistance.

College publicity will aim to reflect its Equality and Diversity Policy and advance equality of opportunity between those people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

7. **Access and Environment**

College staff will ensure advice is available to prospective and existing students, without bias, on transport, courses, grants, benefits and careers.

Prospective students will be advised of their eligibility for additional learning support. This support will be provided to students and “reasonable adjustments” will be made where appropriate to enable them to be successful in their studies.

The College is committed to develop its facilities and accommodation to improve access for learners and staff with disabilities. All signs, regulations, communications and instructions will be as clear, as simple as possible and free from discriminatory language.

The College will take into account the diverse needs of its community in its planning and will seek to provide a range of levels of courses and resources and varied modes of delivery to meet the needs of its community.

The College will allocate resources to reflect its commitment to managing equality and diversity.

8. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Guidance, assessment, support, assistance and counselling will be available to all students to promote their opportunity to follow courses of their choice.

The College will endeavour to offer opportunities to all students to study at a level appropriate to them.

The College will endeavour to ensure all teaching and curriculum materials will advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not by:

- 8.1 ensuring materials are free from bias or stereotypical assumptions or images; and
- 8.2 promoting and celebrating differences.

The College will endeavour to maximise progression opportunities including the accreditation of prior learning and experience.

The College embraces widening participation, enabling those seeking to return to study after a long period of unemployment; having been made redundant; and/or with caring responsibilities, whose personal circumstances have made it difficult for them to benefit from education.

College curriculum will enable students to understand and embrace College values and the College's commitment to advancing equality of opportunity and valuing diversity.

9. Staffing

Managers involved in the recruitment and selection process will all be supported by professionally qualified HR Business Partners.

The College will ensure that fair and adequate arrangements exist for both effectively managing and recording all aspects of the employment relationship, including recruitment and selection.

Action will be taken to ensure that individuals are treated fairly and that decisions on recruitment, selection, pay, training, development, promotion, career management and termination of employment are based solely on objective and job related criteria.

10. Professional Development and Training

All staff are required to take part in mandatory equality and diversity training to ensure everyone that works at the College is aware of the role and responsibilities, so far as equality and diversity is concerned.

The Staff Development Policy will reflect the College's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Lecturers will be offered training and good practice advice to implement and promote Equality and Diversity in their teaching.

11. Audit, Monitoring and Review

The operation of this policy will be audited, monitored and reviewed by the Equality and Diversity Committee reporting to the Corporate Services Committee via the College Management Team.

The College will operate a Single Equality Scheme supplemented by an annual action plan and an annual report.

12. How to report a breach of Equality and Diversity

If any individual feels that they have been treated less favourably and not in accordance with this policy, they should report this via the College's Complaints or Grievance Procedure. In the first instance, matters may be discussed informally with either the College's HR team (staff) or the Student Services Manager (students).