

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

Family:	HR
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Line Manager Responsible:	Director of HR
Approved by:	CEO
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Policy Statement

FREE2LEARN values and recognises the social and cultural diversity in which it operates and seeks to promote equality and respect the dignity of all staff and those individuals to whom it provides services. The company aims to provide conditions which encourage everyone to participate in learning and actively combats harassment and bullying.

The company has a fundamental belief and commitment to the Equality Act 2010 and the right of everyone to be given equal access to opportunities and treated with dignity and respect, regardless of:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy & Maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marital or Civil Partnership Status

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct.
- 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

Scope

The Equality and Diversity Policy covers all members of Free2Learn including learners, staff visitors, contractors and suppliers. Free2learn ensures that this is communicated to these parties, as necessary.

Communication

This policy will be promoted and explained during induction for staff or learners and will be available in the Key Policies section on the website.

Introduction

The rich diversity of our learners and staff is core and vital to Free2learn's distinctive and national reputation. We are proud of our diverse learner communities, and we are committed to ensuring Free2learn is an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone.

We believe that equality and diversity is integral to our inclusive curriculum, our creative innovation, our national reputation and the richness of our organisational life. We are committed to addressing inequality and celebrating diversity to sustain an accessible and inclusive environment for all learners, staff, governors, visitors, community and commercial partners with whom we engage.

Our diversity informs our teaching and our employment practices. Our commitment to staff is underpinned by the following values:

- 1.1. Proactively work together to understand how equality and diversity is both meaningful and relevant to Free2learn on an individual, collective and institutional level.
- 1.2. Prohibiting unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation on grounds of age, caring responsibilities, disability, gender, nationality, race, religious belief (or no belief), sexual orientation socio-economic class or transgender and whether such an identity is actual or *perceived* or whether this is by *association* with persons from any of these equality strands.
- 1.3. Comply with the requirements of equality legislation and fulfil our statutory and regulatory duties. In specific circumstances where differential treatment may be required, we will use lawful exception or exemption; apply genuine occupational requirements or positive intervention to address historical and persistent disadvantage or under-representation; apply an academic admission requirement or provide objective justification that constitutes a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 1.4. Set and monitor targets to increase the presence of those traditionally under-represented, and in accordance with the provision made by equality legislation, develop interventions to address the imbalance.
- 1.5. Strive to employ a diverse workforce which reflects the local community and the learner population
- 1.6. Make clear our expectations and commitments to equality and diversity during the recruitment and selection process and again during induction
- 1.7. Encourage recruitment from groups currently under-represented in the company and promote equality of opportunity and diversity within both the workforce and learners.
- 1.8. Assess Free2Learn policies, strategies and functions for adverse impact upon staff and learners, with respect to all the equality strands.
- 1.9. Actively consult on, communicate and promote our Equality and Diversity Policy, ensuring accessibility for all learners, staff, employers, service users and partners and make reasonable adjustments for staff who become disabled
- 1.10. Provide ongoing continuous professional development in equality and diversity, to equip staff to recognise and embed diversity and to challenge any form of discrimination.

Commitment to Learners

Free2learn provides a learning experience, which is positive, fair and inclusive. The experience begins with the learners' initial contact with Free2learn, and continues beyond the end of their programme of study. We aim to:

- 1.11. Encourage applications from a diverse range of potential learners on all programmes, and where appropriate, undertaking initiatives to attract applications from under-represented groups. We will ensure the publicity, information and guidance we produce displays diverse images, is available in accessible formats and meets the needs of potential learners from diverse backgrounds.
- 1.12. Admit learners solely on meeting the entry criteria and their potential to benefit from the opportunity to study. Disabled applicants and those with learning difficulties are encouraged to discuss their particular requirements in order to identify and accommodate reasonable adjustments enabling them to participate fully as a learner at Free2learn.
- 1.13. Induct learners and share the values, policies and procedures of Free2learn.
- 1.14. Offer support services that provide ongoing information, advice and guidance to learners, employers and other stakeholders; and strive to provide an inclusive teaching and learning environment that is personalised to the individual and which takes account of individual need and cultural backgrounds.
- 1.15. Continually work towards embedding equality and diversity by regularly reviewing the design and content of the curriculum, timetabling, the teaching methods and materials used to embed equality and diversity.
- 1.16. Offer assessment methods that meet both the awarding body guidelines and the needs of the learners.
- 1.17. Provide impartial advice, guidance and tutoring to support progression to further education, apprenticeships, employment, undergraduate and postgraduate study.

Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The SLT will:

- Ensure that the strategic plan has a commitment to equality and diversity
- Receive and respond to staff and to learner feedback
- Agree and monitor progress towards these
- Take an active lead in implementing this policy
- Use equality and diversity data in self-assessment reports to narrow achievement gaps
- Agree and monitor equality targets
- Promoting equality & diversity through our wider curriculum and enrichment
- Provide staff with annual Equality & Diversity Training, which includes guidance around what constitute or could constitute discriminatory practice.
- Ensure record keeping practices are adhered to.

3.3 All staff will:

- Attend regular training opportunities as and when required to develop their knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity; and how this implicates their job role and responsibilities and the expectations Free2learn has of its staff to implement our Equality and Diversity Policy.

Disability Statement

Free2learn is open to all who can benefit from, and qualify for, the courses offered. This includes anyone with learning difficulties or physical disabilities or both.

Learners with learning difficulties or physical disabilities are encouraged to take up the opportunities that all students enjoy and to become fully integrated in Free2Learn.

Teaching staff are responsible for meeting any difficulties in learning of which they are aware.

Specialist help, if needed, is available through services such as the City of London Sensory Impairment Service.

Where possible we can provide portable computers for use in Free2learn. We make appropriate help and support available during the examination period.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The SLT will monitor and evaluate achievement in respect of equal opportunities and diversity by taking the following actions:

- HR team will monitor & analyse representation and performance of different groups of staff (Sex, Race, Disability, Age)
- Teaching & Learning will monitor & analyse the performance of different groups of learners (Sex, Race, Disability, Age), with the aim of ensuring that there not any achievement gaps.
- Gathering statistics about staff and learners, analysis the statistics, identify any issues arising and make proposals for specific actions to address any inequalities
- Preparing and delivering an agreed Action Plan each year to develop equality
- Ensuring marketing, recruitment and selection procedures and training conform to equality requirements
- Ensuring training and course design takes account of equality issues
- Reporting regularly on equality to the Governing Body
- Keeping staff and learners regularly updated in respect of equal opportunities issues

Bullying & Harassment

As part of our duty of care to employees, the Management of Free2Learn is committed to creating a work environment that is free of bullying and harassment. Bullying and harassment in any form is unacceptable and will be subject to the Company's Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure. The company expects all of its employees to treat fellow employees with respect.

Harassment, in general terms is:

- Unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of both men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality of any personal characteristic of the individual and may be persistent or an isolated incident.

The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient. Bullying may be characterised as:

Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour would be:

- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly on gender/race/disability grounds)
- Copying memos or e-mails that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone - picking on them or setting them up to fail
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Unfair treatment
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- Unwelcome sexual advances - touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- Preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- Sending aggressive or threatening emails
- Making fun of someone's disability or way of speaking

It is the responsibility of Managers to ensure that employees are not subject to bullying or harassment.

If an employee has a grievance, they should approach their Manager or Director. All complaints will be treated confidentially and will be investigated promptly and objectively. Should a complaint be upheld it will be dealt with under the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.

Both the complainant and accused will be given an opportunity to state their case.

If the bullying or harassment is of a serious nature the accused may be suspended, with pay, until the investigation has been completed.

If an employee makes an unfounded allegation of bullying and/or harassment for malicious reason they will be dealt with under the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.

Should the complaint be upheld and both the complainant and accused remain in the same department, the situation will be closely monitored by their manager

FREE2LEARN

Bullying and Harassment Incident Report Form

Name:

Course:

Address:

Telephone:

Briefly describe what happened (include times and dates):

Names and contacts of witnesses:

Name of person completing form:

Date:

Name of Manager responsible for investigation:

Date:

Action taken:

Appendix A:

Types of Discrimination

Direct Discrimination

This occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.

Associative Discrimination

This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic (for example, a mother of a disabled child).

Perceptive Discrimination

This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when an employer has a condition, rule, policy or a practice in the company that applies to everyone but which particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if employers can show they acted reasonably in managing their business.

Harassment

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”. Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

Third Party Harassment

The Equality Act makes employers potentially liable for harassment of their employees by people (third parties) who are not employees of the company, such as customers or clients.

Employers

Will only be liable when harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions and they were aware that it has taken place but did not take reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have

maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need to compare treatment of a complainant with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint under the Act.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

The duty to make reasonable adjustments comprises three requirements for service providers and those exercising public functions. These requirements are:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.