EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

The Equality Act 2010 brings together previous discrimination laws and regulations into one Act. The Act was brought into force in phases, beginning in October 2010. The Act applies to Great Britain but not to Northern Ireland and discrimination legislation is extended to cover those discriminated against by ‘association’ or ‘perception’.

The College intends to provide an environment for students, staff and fellows free from bullying and unlawful discrimination (which can include harassment and victimisation) and to foster mutual respect, consideration and an inclusive approach to equality.

The College recognises that its success depends equally on students, staff and fellows. Capitalising on what is unique about individuals and drawing on their different perspectives and experiences will add value to the way the College operates.

The College will constantly strive to create a productive environment, representative of and responsive to different cultures and groups, where everyone has an equal chance to succeed. Everyone in the College has a responsibility to embrace and support this vision and must continue to challenge behaviour and attitudes that prevent the College from achieving this.

Using fair, objective and innovative employment practices, the College’s aim is to ensure that:

- all employees and potential employees are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment;
- all employees have the right to be free from harassment of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour, whether based on sex, race, disability, age, political or religious belief, sexuality, bullying or any other form of unwanted behaviour; and
- all employees have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination.

Through the College’s policies and procedures, the College aims to ensure the diversity of the community it serves is reflected at all levels within the staff, students and fellowship. The College will act reasonably and will endeavour to adhere to all statutory provisions of the Equality Act 2010, attempting to ensure that no student, applicant or staff/fellow member is treated less favourably than another, because he or she belongs to a protected group.

Protected groups are defined in the Equality Act 2010 as; Sex, Gender Reassignment, Marriage or Civil Partnership, Pregnancy or Maternity, Race (including Ethnic or National Origin, Nationality or Colour), Disability, Sexual Orientation, Age, or Religion or Belief.
Some brief examples are provided below;

**Gender**

Women and men are fully and properly represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the College through:

- challenging gender stereotypes, for example that people of a certain gender are better or worse at undertaking particular roles; and
- supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home.

**Trans-Gender Status**

People who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender re-assignment are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment. The College will take positive steps to support a trans-gender person and ensure he or she is treated with dignity and respect.

**Marital Status**

People are treated fairly and equally in the workplace irrespective of their marital or family status.

**Race**

The racial and cultural diversity of our community is represented at all levels of the organisation through challenging racial stereotypes, for example that people of a certain race, nationality or ethnicity are better or worse at undertaking particular roles and understanding, respecting and valuing different backgrounds and perspectives.

**Age**

Age legislation was first introduced in 2006. The Equality Act extends the previous legislation to make it unlawful to discriminate against someone aged 18 or over because of age when providing services or carrying out public functions when the outcome is negative or harmful. This part of the Act took effect on 1 October 2012.

The College strives to ensure that age diversity within the workforce is promoted and valued through:

- challenging age stereotyping; and
- recognising the benefits of a mixed-age workforce.

**Religious Belief and Political Opinion**

People are treated fairly in the workplace, irrespective of their religious or political opinions, by recognising individuals’ freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution. The right of the individual to practice his or her religion is also recognised and, where reasonable and practicable to do so, this will be facilitated.
Sexuality

People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexuality through:

- respecting different lifestyles; and
- challenging negative stereotypical views.

The College expects each member of staff to enter into the spirit of the policy and to ensure that a positive equal opportunities climate exists, by treating others on their merits and by disassociating themselves from any form of direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation, or sexual, racial or any other type of harassment.

Types of Discrimination

Direct discrimination arises when a person is treated less favourably because of assumptions (which may be unconscious and will not necessarily be motivated by prejudice or hostility) about the group to which they belong.

Examples

- A woman with young children is not employed because it is feared that she might be an unreliable member of staff.
- A Sikh applicant for a senior post is turned down because it is feared he will not “fit in” with an existing (all white) team.

Indirect discrimination occurs where an apparently neutral requirement is applied which is more difficult for members of certain groups to meet and which cannot be justified on objective grounds.

Examples

- A policy that no members of the workforce can work part-time could constitute indirect discrimination as many women can only work on a part-time basis in order to meet childcare responsibilities. It may not be justified, if the employer’s operational needs can still be met by more flexible working arrangements.

- A requirement for applicants to possess a GCSE in English as a selection criterion. This requirement would be harder to meet for those people who have been educated overseas and may not be justified if all that is really needed is the ability to demonstrate a reasonable level of literacy.

Disability discrimination occurs where a person is unjustifiably disadvantaged for a reason connected with his or her disability. It also occurs where an employer fails to make a reasonable adjustment to accommodate the needs of a disabled person. It is important to realise that it is not only people who are visibly disabled who fall within the definition of people who are disabled. A person has a disability if he or she has physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Examples

- A requirement for a member of staff to hold a driving licence for a job which involves little travelling.
- Failure to recruit someone with hearing difficulties without first considering whether suitable adjustments can be made to working arrangements.

The abilities of disabled people are recognised and valued at all levels of the College through:

- focusing on what people can do rather than on what they cannot;
- challenging stereotypes about people with disabilities; and
- making appropriate adjustments in the workplace to help people with disabilities or long term illnesses to achieve their full career potential.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably because he or she has taken or intends to take action to assert the rights conferred by anti-discrimination legislation or because he or she has assisted someone else with their complaint (for example by providing evidence).

Harassment occurs when a person is subjected to unwanted conduct (whether physical, verbal or non-verbal) based on their personal characteristics, or membership of a particular group, which has the purpose or affect of violating that person’s dignity. (See the College’s Harassment Policy for more details.)

Enforcement
The College regards direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment as serious matters. Members of staff who fail to comply with this policy will be subject to the College’s Disciplinary Procedure. All breaches of this policy will be regarded as serious disciplinary matters, and will, if there has been victimisation, intentional discrimination or deliberate harassment, be regarded as potential gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.
Should an employee feel that he or she is being treated unfairly, he or she should raise a grievance through the College’s Grievance Procedure (refer to Staff Code). If an employee feels it is inappropriate to approach his or her Head of Department or line manager, he or she may approach an independent member of management or the HR Manager.

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The HR Manager has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation (at least annually) and additionally whenever there are relevant changes in legislation or to our working practices.

Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the HR Manager.