

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Introduction

At Gateway Qualifications we aim to create an environment which celebrates differences and strives for equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. More than a mere commitment, this Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy stands as a framework, informing every aspect of the work we do. It is our aim to support our staff and learners, including apprentices, of all abilities, ensuring the development, delivery, and awarding of qualifications in a fair and inclusive manner. This Policy highlights our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, setting the tone for a culture where every individual is valued, empowered, and respected.

Purpose

Our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy aims to create a fair and respectful workplace and learning environment for everyone, no matter who they are. It sets out the rules and principles for how we operate, and the governance of this Policy.

This Policy represents Gateway Qualifications' undertaking to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion within its service provision and in its role as an awarding organisation, including the development, delivery, and awarding of qualifications. Additionally, this Policy underlines our commitment to complying with the Equality Act 2010 and upholding the fundamental principles of equity and diversity as an employer.

Adhering to this Policy shows that we are dedicated to making sure fairness and diversity are not just words, but principles we actively live by as an organisation.

Please refer to the end of this document for the relevant Conditions of Recognition, and Appendices relating to Associated Policies and Procedure (Appendix A) and the Legal Framework (Appendix B).

Scope

The following individuals and groups are obligated to comply with, and actively contribute to, the principles outlined within this Policy:

- Gateway Qualifications' Trustees and Committee Members: Holding pivotal roles in governance, decision-making, and strategy, ensuring the alignment of their actions with the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Gateway Qualifications' Staff: Comprising employees within the organisation, responsible for operational activities and fostering an environment that embodies the principles of this Policy.
- Gateway Qualifications' Wider Workforce (Contractors): This category includes a diverse range of individuals, such as consultants, qualification developers, assessment associates, Internal and External Quality Assurers, Centre, and Subject Moderators, among others. They are essential contributors whose work significantly impacts the implementation of equity, diversity, and inclusion principles within Gateway Qualifications.

- Centre Management and Staff: Individuals responsible for managing and operating Recognised Centres (Centres) affiliated with Gateway Qualifications, ensuring compliance with and promotion of these principles within their respective environments.
- Learners, including apprentices, utilising Gateway Qualifications' Products and Services: This Policy extends its reach to learners and apprentices accessing qualifications and services. They are essential stakeholders whose experiences and interactions must align with the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Principles

General Principles:

1. **Opposition to Discrimination:** We oppose all forms of discrimination and prejudice. Discriminatory behaviour is actively challenged to align with our organisational values.
2. **Safe Environment:** We support a safe and respectful environment, taking decisive actions against inappropriate behaviour to ensure the well-being of our staff, learners, apprentices, and wider workforce.
3. **Lived Reality:** We go beyond compliance, ensuring equity is a reality for everyone associated with Gateway Qualifications, acknowledging, and recognising differences across various aspects of people's identities.
4. **Inclusivity:** Inclusivity is embedded in our core practices, recognising, and valuing the contributions and needs of each individual, shaping our organisational culture.
5. **Continuous Commitment:** Our dedication is not just a statement; it's woven into every aspect of our existence, ensuring learners, apprentices and staff thrive in an inclusive environment.
6. **Beyond Legal Compliance:** Other aspects of a person's identity, background, or circumstance, beyond those covered in the Equality Act 2010, can cause them to experience discrimination. For example, a person's socio-economic status, class, or background. Gateway Qualifications is committed to advancing equity and eliminating discrimination on these and other grounds. We aim to actively work to dismantle barriers that disadvantage individuals.
7. **Recognition of Uniqueness:** We value each individual's distinctiveness, understanding that fairness and equal opportunities and outcomes go beyond uniform treatment. Diverse life experiences, backgrounds, and needs are acknowledged and addressed proactively to eliminate barriers.
8. **Compliance and Legal Responsibilities:** Upholding equity, diversity, and inclusion fulfils our legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and other regulatory requirements, as outlined in Appendix B.

Principles as an Awarding Organisation:

1. **Quality and Accessibility:** We focus on delivering high-quality, accessible qualifications for all learners, including apprentices, advocating for fair assessment regardless of ability, and providing necessary adjustments to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes.
2. **Bias-Free Qualifications:** Our commitment to equity drives the development of qualifications, programmes, and assessment criteria devoid of stereotypes. We actively celebrate diverse groups' contributions within program content and materials to ensure no advantage or disadvantage based on any protected characteristic.

3. Guiding Organisational Policies: These foundational principles underpin all our policies and practices, as outlined in Appendix A. They shape the creation, delivery, and awarding of qualifications and Access to HE Diplomas, ensuring fairness and inclusivity.
4. Expectation for Centres: We expect our partner Centres to share our dedication to embracing diversity. They are required to provide equitable opportunities and foster a sense of value and empowerment for every individual, irrespective of differences in race, disability, gender, age, nationality, sexual orientation, and more.

Centre Responsibility

Centres are required to comply with the provisions within the Centre Agreement terms and conditions regarding Equality and Diversity (section 13).

We expect that Centre staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our regulated qualifications, and their Learners, are aware of this Policy, current equality legislation and regulatory requirements.

Gateway Qualifications' Responsibility

Gateway Qualifications is responsible for ensuring that its trustees, staff, contractors, and learners, including apprentices, are aware of this Policy and the consequences on non-compliance, current equality legislation and relevant regulatory requirements.

Implementation

In order to implement this Policy, Gateway Qualifications will:

1. Communicate this Policy to all those associated with the services provided by and received from Gateway Qualifications.
2. Ensure the Policy is accessible in a place and format for all users and providers of Gateway Qualifications' services.
3. Provide training/development sessions, as appropriate, to ensure full understanding of the Policy, its principles, expectations, monitoring, and interconnection with other Gateway Qualifications policies and/or service agreements.
4. Ensure that the principles and values of this Policy are integrated and promoted within every aspect of the qualification lifecycle, from development, delivery and awarding, for example, ensuring that recruitment, publications, marketing and promotional materials, key documentation such as handbooks and guidance materials for trustees, staff, contractors and students explicitly endorse and support the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion as stated in this Policy.
5. Actively ensure staff and contractor recruitment applies the principles of this Policy in its selection, induction, development, and progression processes to ensure fair and equitable opportunities for its workforce.
6. Require appropriate and relevant responsibilities and duties in respect of implementing the Policy into job descriptions and work objectives of employees and the wider workforce.

7. Actively engage with and support its contractors to apply a fair and equitable selection, progression, and completion process to ensure its students are enabled to achieve fair outcomes.
8. Operate and promote a clear and transparent complaints process whereby trustees, staff, contractors, learners, and apprentices are provided with a mechanism through which to raise concerns, complaints and identify areas of noncompliance with the Policy. (See Complaints Policy and Procedures for external use and Disciplinary Capability Grievance and Appeals Policy in Appendix A below)
9. Clearly communicate the process through which concerns and complaints will be managed, reviewed, and resolved and provide a regular reporting back mechanism for transparency as to Gateway Qualifications' commitment to the enforcement of this Policy.
10. Actively commit to investigating and addressing incidents of discrimination and harassment using the policies identified in Appendix A and in time providing quarterly reports on reported incidents.
11. Ensure mechanisms for the gathering of equalities data regarding staff, learners, apprentices, and services is established.
12. Establish processes by which to analyse and report on equalities data on a quarterly basis and report outcomes, good practice and improvement plans to the board of trustees in the annual equalities report.

In complying with its own implementation points, Gateway Qualifications will be able to demonstrate its active commitment to its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.

Review and Monitoring

To ensure compliance with this Policy and to determine if it is achieving its stated principles a monitoring and review process will be developed and undertaken quarterly and its outcomes presented annually to the Board of Trustees.

Monitoring and review will be undertaken by:

- The assurance of appropriate tools established to gather protected characteristics data for staff, learners, and apprentices alongside a data protection compliant tracking process to determine outcomes based on protected characteristics.
- Working towards quarterly analysis of this data to:
 - Identify disparities in the registration and achievement outcomes for learners and apprentices.
 - Review of associated reasonable adjustments or relevant/appropriate special considerations applied to learner groups, including apprentices, who are at risk of or are experiencing disadvantage in their learning experience.
 - Identify recruitment, development and progression disparities of staff and contractors.
 - Review reports of harassment and discrimination via the grievance/complaints process and consider the type and frequency of complaints, the management of the issues and the outcomes applied.
- Creating an annual report to consider the patterns evidenced in the quarterly review reports alongside actions taken and establish an annual action plan against which risk and improvement will be monitored at the quarterly review meetings.

- Ensure a clear process is identified where high-risk issues or outcomes are identified and will be fast tracked to the Chief Executive.
- Ensure details of outcomes of each review are made available to the qualification’s regulators upon request.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the Policy, please contact:

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Version: 1.0 February 2024
 Policy author: Carol Snape
 Board approval date: 13 March 2024
 Review date: February 2025

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition A1: Suitability for continuing recognition. Condition B1: The role of the Responsible Officer Condition C2: Arrangements with Centres Condition D2: Accessibility of qualifications.
Qualifications Wales Conditions of Recognition
Condition A1: Suitability for continuing recognition. Condition B1: The role of the Responsible Officer Condition C2: Arrangements with Centres Condition D2: Accessibility of qualifications
QAA licensing criteria
Not applicable

Appendix A – Associated Policies and Procedures

This Policy operates in conjunction with the following interconnected policies and procedures, forming a cohesive framework:

Internal Policies

1. Annual Leave and Working Hours Policy
2. Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy
3. Appraisal Policy
4. Disciplinary Capability Grievance and Appeals Policy
5. Family Friendly and Work-Life Balance Policy
6. Learning and Development Policy
7. Professional Standards Policy
8. Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy
9. Recruitment and Selection Policy
10. Redundancy and Restructuring Policy
11. Reward and Recognition Policy
12. Safeguarding Policy

External / Centre facing Policies

13. Appeals Policy and Procedures
14. Complaints Policy and Procedures
15. Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy and Procedures

Appendix B - Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 introduces the term 'protected characteristic' to refer to aspects of a person's identity explicitly protected from unlawful discrimination. Nine are identified:

- race
- disability
- gender
- age
- sexual orientation
- religion and belief
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy / maternity
- marriage / civil partnership.

The Equality Act 2010 introduces a Public Sector Equality Duty, in force from April 2011, which requires Gateway Qualifications to give due regard to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations.

'Advance' involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- a) remove / minimise disadvantages experienced by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- b) take steps to meet needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who don't share it.
- c) encourage persons with a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activities where participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

'Foster good relations' includes having due regard to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The Duty covers eight of the nine protected characteristics (only the first 'arm' of the new duty, to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, applies to the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnerships).

The Equality Act 2010 recognises the following types of discrimination:

- direct discrimination, including associative and perception discrimination.
- indirect discrimination
- harassment
- victimisation
- discrimination arising from a disability.
- failure to make reasonable adjustments.

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated unfairly, or less favourably than another person, because they have a protected characteristic. This often arises because of assumptions, stereotyping, or prejudice. Direct discrimination also covers **association discrimination or perception discrimination**. This is direct discrimination against someone

because they associate with a person who has the protected characteristic or because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied that appears to affect everyone equally but which in fact puts people who share a protected characteristic at a disadvantage.

Harassment occurs when someone behaves in such a way that their conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an environment that is offensive, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or intimidating for a person, where:

- this is related to a protected characteristic (except pregnancy and maternity or marriage and civil partnerships)
- this is of a sexual nature (sexual harassment)
- a person is treated less favourably because they have either submitted to or rejected sexual harassment, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment (this is known as 'consequential harassment').

Discrimination arising from a disability occurs when a disabled person is treated less favourably than others because of something connected to their impairment.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments occurs when an organisation fails to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person, to avoid the disabled person being placed at a substantial disadvantage when compared with a non-disabled person.

Victimisation occurs when a person experiences disadvantage because they have supported someone in making a complaint or an allegation of discrimination, or because they personally have made an allegation of discrimination.

Section 53 of The Equality Act 2010 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.