

Equality Policy

TYPE: Policy

PURPOSE: To inform staff and students of how Solihull College & University Centre will fulfil its statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and avoid discrimination in line with the requirements of the Equality Act as they relate to Further & Higher Education and the public sector.

SCOPE: This policy applies to staff and students.

RESPONSIBILITY: The Vice Principal HR & Student Services is responsible for this policy. The Director of Student Services will support the Vice Principal in the monitoring of the policy.

LEGAL CONTEXT: The Equality Act 2010

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Section 1 – Introduction

This policy describes how Solihull College & University Centre (SCUC) will fulfil its statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and avoid discrimination. It demonstrates how it is placing the promotion of equality and diversity at the centre of all aspects of SCUC's work. It is intended to meet the requirements of the Equality Act as they relate to Further & Higher Education and the public sector.

The policy will apply to all students and staff at SCUC and service users and will have an important role in contributing to SCUC's success. It will also be of interest to our partner organisations and our stakeholders.

Legislative context

Nine main pieces of legislation have been merged to form the Equality Act 2010:

- the Equal Pay Act 1970
- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- the Race Relations Act 1976
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- the Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

Section 2 – Solihull College & University Centre's Equality Vision, Values and Principles

Solihull College & University Centre is very strong in the area of equality of opportunity. SCUC has a culture where difference is respected and diversity celebrated.

SCUC celebrates and values the diversity brought to its workforce by individuals, and believes that SCUC benefits from engaging staff from a variety of backgrounds and abilities thus allowing it to meet the needs of a diverse student population. SCUC will continue to treat all employees and students with respect and dignity, and seek to provide a positive working and learning environment free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

SCUC will seek not only to eliminate discrimination, but also to create a working and learning environment based on positive relations. To this end, SCUC undertakes to provide training and support for staff, to consult with all staff about their experience of the working environment, and to provide diverse images in any materials that it produces for learners and staff. The aim is to create a positive, inclusive ethos where any issues of stereotyping and discrimination can be discussed openly, with a shared commitment to challenging and preventing discrimination, to respecting diversity and difference, and to encouraging good relations between people.

SCUC will work towards the elimination of discrimination whether overt or covert, and will seek to ensure that individuals and communities have equal access to learning programmes and facilities.

Our mission statement, 'Solihull College & University Centre will make significant contributions to the local and regional economies and beyond, by providing high quality vocational education and training for individuals, employers and the wider community' is central to our approach to equality.

Our vision states clearly that SCUC will be outstanding in its work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Students, parents, employers and stakeholders will recognise our deep commitment to diversity and inclusion. Positive attitudes will be evident in all aspects of SCUC's work. The moral, ethical and the business case for diversity will be championed by the leadership of the College.

SCUC's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all will continue to be reflected in our strategic plan, our strategic objectives and key priorities.

The strong focus on equality of opportunity and our support for learners forms a key part of our self-assessment reporting, our quality improvement and our development planning.

Improving equality brings with it benefits to the organisation as it:

- Helps to create a positive atmosphere where there is a shared commitment to value diversity and respect difference
- mainstreams equality by focusing on the different needs of employees and students (learners)
- strengthens our work with our partners and stakeholders
- improves quality by meeting the needs of all our customers, internal and external

Section 3 – Student and staff profiles

Student and staff profiles in relation to age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious beliefs can be found in the Equality and Diversity Annual Reports, which are available on the College website.

Section 4 – The General Duties

The Equality Act harmonises the existing three duties into one new duty, which covers all protected characteristics

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

It should be noted that being married or in a civil partnership is NOT a protected characteristic for the further and higher education institution provisions.

The single public sector equality duty requires public authorities to give due regard to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations.

Section 5 – The Specific Duties

- Providers covered by the specific duties must publish information to demonstrate compliance with the general public sector equality duty across all of its functions.
- Published information must include, in particular: (a) information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are its employees (providing organisation has at least 150 staff) and other persons affected by policies and practices (for example students).
- Information is published at yearly intervals through the publication of the College's Annual Equality and Diversity Report.
- Providers covered by the specific duties must prepare and publish one or more equality objectives it thinks it should achieve to meet the general duty.
- Objectives must be specific and measurable.
- Objectives must be published at intervals of not greater than four years from the date of the last publication. The College's objectives are provided in the College Annual Equality & Diversity Report

Section 6 - Consulting our Staff and Students

We have committed to further developing our consultation and review activities as part of our Equality Policy implementation, ensuring involvement of staff, students and other relevant stakeholders. To ensure that our HR policies and practices are fair and extend to all staff, HR have offered the opportunity to all staff to comment if they feel the procedures discriminate against them in any way or, equally, if they feel particularly supported by HR procedures.

Students are asked, at least annually, through surveys to provide feedback on equality and our Student Voice Engagement Strategy allows students to raise issues through Student conferences, councils and focus groups.

Staff are asked through satisfaction and engagement surveys to indicate how strongly they feel the college has a commitment to equal opportunities.

Section 7 – Information Gathering and Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 SCUC monitors the progress of all students and already produces comparative reports on how well our 16 – 19 and 19+, BAME, LDD, male and female students are

progressing. This information is collected annually and is used to inform review and target setting and action planning at faculty, school, and course level. Managers in each faculty work with the relevant Vice Principals to monitor the progress of their action plans.

The Education Inspection Framework (EIF) identifies performance against equality and diversity as a key indicator for Leadership and Management. This includes the extent to which leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high quality inclusive education for **all** learners. All college self-assessment reports from course SARs to the main college SAR will address this aspect.

Learner surveys form part of our annual review cycle as do focus groups with students. Feedback from students on equality is already included as part of this process and is enhanced by focus groups specifically related to the actions identified through the annual Equality Objectives. Equal opportunities monitoring of staff is undertaken annually as part of an individual staff data check. SCUC gathers information on sexual orientation and religion or belief. In addition to formal consultation with recognised unions, staff focus groups have the opportunity to comment on equality and diversity issues. This information is reported to the Equality & Diversity Group. It forms part of our reporting to Governors and is included in our Equal Opportunities Annual Report. The monitoring process is used to ensure that staff are treated equally in terms of promotion, staff development, grading and that relevant policies are well publicised and their use recorded.

Data collection on students is done by Student Information Systems led by the Information Systems Manager. Information on staff is collected by the Human Resources Team. All data collected is subject to General Data Protection Regulations but used generically and aggregated to support improvements and target setting. Use of specific information is tightly controlled, is circulated only on a need to know basis and with strict guidelines for its storage and retrieval. Students are encouraged to respond to the gathering of information on protected characteristics gathered through the enrolment process.

Progress against Equality Objectives is reviewed at meetings of the Equality & Diversity Group.

7.2 Monitoring Our Progress

To inform the setting of goals and the measurement of our progress in achieving them, we will collect and analyse the following information by the protected characteristics of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

7.2.1 For Learners:

- Applications and progression rates for admission to courses
- Retention rates
- Achievement rates
- Disciplinary action
- Complaints
- Student surveys.

7.2.2 For Employees:

- Gender Pay Gap information
- Profiles of employees by grade/salary scales and type of work
- Recruitment application, short listing and appointment
- Type of contract (permanent, temporary)
- Training/Staff development
- Promotion application and success rates
- Take up of flexible working arrangements
- Disciplinary/capability proceedings
- Grievances
- Exit surveys.

Section 8 – Division of Responsibilities

Leadership and management

8.1 Governors are responsible for ensuring that:

- The membership of the Corporation reflects, as far as possible, the diversity of the communities served by SCUC
- SCUC's strategic plan includes a commitment to equality of opportunity
- They are aware of the Corporation's statutory responsibilities in relation to equality legislation as an employer and service provider.
- They receive and monitor information on learners and staff.

8.2 SCUC's Principal and Senior Leadership Team are responsible for taking the lead in creating a positive, inclusive ethos that challenges discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour on the part of managers, staff or learners.

All managers are responsible for ensuring that:

- They are aware of SCUC's statutory duties in relation to equality legislation
- All aspects of SCUC's policy and activity are sensitive to equality issues
- Monitoring information is collected and analysed
- Targets are set for the recruitment, retention and achievement of learners based upon the analysis of monitoring information
- Learning walk reports include criteria on equal and diversity
- Internal verification procedures include scrutiny of equality issues
- Curriculum areas are required to assess performance in relation to equality and take action as appropriate
- The procedures for the recruitment and promotion of staff enshrine best practice in equal opportunities
- Targets are set on the recruitment of staff based upon the analysis of monitoring information
- SCUC's publicity materials present appropriate and positive messages
- Learner induction programmes and tutorial programmes reflect SCUC's commitment to promote equality of opportunity
- Appropriate training and development are provided to support the appreciation and understanding of diversity.

8.3 Staff are responsible for ensuring that:

- They are aware of SCUC's statutory duties in relation to equality legislation

- Their schemes of work, lesson content and teaching resources demonstrate sensitivity to issues of equality
- They challenge inappropriate behaviour by learners, work placement providers, outside contractors or other members of staff
- SCUC and each of its individual staff confront discrimination, whether witting or unwitting, whenever it occurs.

Section 9 - Publicising our policy and Progress

9.1 To the public (including learners, work placement providers and staff):

- Our commitment to equality will be highlighted in our prospectus, our Equal Opportunities Annual Report and will be published on our website: www.solihull.ac.uk. A summary of the results of our monitoring information will be included in our equal opportunities report, where this does not breach individual confidentiality.

9.2 To learners:

- All learners receive summary information on equal opportunities during induction. Copies of the policy will be available in SCUC's libraries and through the intranet and in different formats
- The induction programmes for learners highlight SCUC's commitment to equality of opportunity, the action to be taken by learners who suffer discrimination and the action to be taken against such perpetrators of discrimination
- Personal and subject tutors will reinforce this information during tutorials, in class or during work-based monitoring visits.

9.3 To work placement providers:

- All work placement providers will receive a copy of the policy and will be asked to signify their understanding of, and agreement to, these responsibilities
- SCUC will publish the requirement to offer appropriate training covering diversity issues to their staff
- SCUC will promote the requirements of students from under-represented groups to providers
- A summary of the results of monitoring will be included in the appropriate SCUC publication (e.g. newsletter) sent to relevant employers.

9.4 To staff:

- All staff will receive and have access to a full copy of the policy
- The staff induction programme highlights SCUC's commitment to equality, action to be taken by staff who suffer discrimination and the action to be taken against any perpetrators of such discrimination
- A summary of the results of our monitoring information will be included in the Equality & Diversity Annual Report

9.5 To Governors:

- All governors will receive a full copy of the policy

- The governors' induction programme highlights SCUC's commitment to equality, action to be taken by staff who suffer discrimination and the action to be taken against any perpetrators of such discrimination
- A summary of the results of our monitoring information will be included in reports to the Corporation

Any published information will have due regard for individual confidentiality.

Section 10 - Complaints

- 10.1 SCUC seeks to provide a supportive environment for those who make claims of discrimination or harassment on the grounds of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief.
- 10.2 Acts of discrimination (direct, indirect, by association or by perception), harassment, victimisation or abuse will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.
- 10.3 Staff or learners, who feel they are being discriminated against by other members of staff or by other learners, should raise the matter under the Grievance/Harassment Procedure, which will, if the accusation is upheld, be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.
- 10.4 If, in the course of their work, members of SCUC staff suffer discrimination from members of the public, SCUC will take appropriate action and provide appropriate support.
- 10.5 Any discriminatory behaviour directed against staff by learners, or by learners against other learners, will be dealt with under the student disciplinary procedure.

Section 11 - Review and Consultation

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in accordance with legislative developments and the need for good practice, by the SCUC's Equality and Diversity Group.
- 11.2 As part of the review the Equality and Diversity Group will seek and take into account the views of stakeholders including staff, learners, work placement providers, the local consultation/negotiating arrangements within SCUC, and appropriate equality bodies.

Section 12 – Putting the scheme into practice

Our Equality Policy is accompanied by SCUC's Equality Objectives which will be revised annually.