

Single Equality Scheme

Our Role and our Commitment to Equality and Diversity

The College is committed to the equality of opportunity and to a proactive approach to equality, which supports and encourages under-represented groups, promotes inclusiveness and values diversity. We will strive to ensure the college is open and accessible to all those wishing to participate in and capable of benefiting from post-16 education.

We want to ensure people at WQE are not discriminated against for any reason, including:

- race/ ethnic origin
- disability
- gender re-assignment
- gender
- pregnancy, maternity and paternity
- age
- religion/ belief
- sexual orientation
- caring responsibilities
- trade union membership or non-membership

In addition to advancing equality of opportunity and equality of access to our services, we will uphold a principle of diversity. We recognise that diversity adds another dimension to the equality agenda and in promoting greater community cohesion by fostering good relations. We aim to make sure that the differences between people, groups and identities are understood, valued and respected. Managing diversity is about improving how people can work together by recognising and valuing their similarities *and* differences.

We recognise our obligations and responsibilities as an employer and as a major provider of education in the community of Leicester and Leicestershire. We seek to reflect our commitment to equality and diversity in our dealings with members of the public, other agencies and suppliers of services and supplies.

The Equality Act 2010 requires us to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between people from different racial groups, between men and women, girls and boys and between people with a disability and people without, and to report annually on how we have done this. We need to build equality of opportunity into all policies, programs and actions.

1. Introduction

This document is the College's 2023 Single Equality Scheme, it comprises two parts: the details of the Single Equality Scheme; and an action plan. The scheme reflects the different strands of the Equality Act 2010 and the Government's single approach, as well as the Public Sector Equality Duty of 2011. An action plan is in place to identify areas to be targeted to achieve greater equality in terms of the eight protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, and the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill 2015 the College supports the development of a society in which:

- People's ability to achieve their potential is not limited by prejudice or discrimination
- There is respect for and protection of each individual's human rights
- There is respect for the dignity and worth of each individual
- Each individual has an equal opportunity to participate in society
- Good relations between groups are fostered and are based on understanding and valuing of diversity and on shared respect for equality and human rights

2. Purpose

This is the College Single Equality Scheme (SES). The Scheme describes in a single document how the College will fulfil its statutory duties to advance equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination, demonstrating its commitment to placing the promotion of equality and diversity at the centre of every aspect of its work. By incorporating our individual strategies for race, disability, gender, religion or belief and sexuality into one overarching scheme, we are creating a coherent framework for promoting equality and diversity within the College.

3. Legislative Context

Five pieces of legislation are central to our SES in addition to other relevant legislation as set out in Annex A. These are:

- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RR(A)A)
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA)
- Equality Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Counter Terrorism and Security Bill 2015

These laws impose positive duties on all public bodies to eliminate discrimination, advancing race, disability and gender equality in everything we do. Therefore, as an integral part of the SES, we will continue to address issues related to the above five key legislative areas.

4. Responsibility for the SES

All members of the College community have a role in contributing to the success of the SES. The College Leadership Team, supported by the Equality Forum are responsible for the content and management of the SES. The SES action plan identifies those colleagues across the college who are responsible for each action and these will be reflected in the individual objectives for those involved.

5. WQE as an Employer

Currently we employ around 320 people plus 49 part-time invigilators. We have well-established recruitment and employment related policies and procedures that reflect our commitment to equality and diversity and that aim to assist us in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.

6. WQE as a Provider of Education

We are committed to ensuring that teaching and learning are available and accessible to a broad range of students. We will achieve

this through: diverse marketing and admissions arrangements; the provision of a broad range of examined and other courses; the use of a range of teaching methods and media and the provision of a broad range of student support services that cater for students with diverse needs.

7. WQE as a Partner

We seek to work in partnership with a broad range of other institutions and agencies to provide our services and to support others in achieving community cohesion. We will seek to ensure those partners adopt the same commitment to equality and diversity as we do. Our concern is to ensure that students across the learning community enjoy the same positive experience wherever their place of study. To this end we will work closely with our partners to share experiences and learn from each other's best practice.

8. WQE Facilities

We are committed to ensuring our buildings are accessible as well as the facilities therein (as far as is reasonably practicable) and to the creation of an environment where everyone can live, learn and work without unnecessary barriers. For example, all curriculum areas are accessible by wheelchair users and access to many other college facilities has been simplified and improved to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation and to enable disabled persons to fully participate in college life.

9. Reviewing and Monitoring the SES

The College undertakes to conduct comprehensive and effective monitoring in all aspects of equality issues through the annual self- assessment process. The legal responsibility for meeting statutory responsibilities for equality issues lies with the Corporation. Progress towards meeting our commitments detailed in this Scheme and associated Plans will be reported to the College Leadership Team and through them to the Corporation.

The Associate Principal (Students and Welfare) has lead responsibility for equality issues and the Diversity Forum is chaired by the Communications and Equality Officer whose responsibilities through chairing the Diversity Forum are to:

- Develop appropriate schemes such as the SES that meet the College's legal duties and enable it to address and identify areas for development
- Identify and disseminate good equality practices within the College
- Consider and recommend relevant training programmes for staff, governors and students
- Identify key action points and areas for development

The SES and the action plan will be reviewed regularly with annual reports on equality matters to the Corporation. Changes may be made in the interim in response to organisational changes, changes to job roles and titles, legislative changes or other factors necessitating review.

News about our SES will be shared with our stakeholders and, particularly with those who have helped to develop our SES. We will continue to publicise and seek the views of others about our SES and about our progress towards the targets set out in our action plan in a variety of ways:

- Place on Staffnet/SharePoint, WQE website and WQE online/Teams
- Copies signposted to all staff and governors.
- Additionally, signposted for students via focus groups and via discussion with the Student Executive/Council via their Equalities representative.
- Disseminated in training sessions for staff and through appropriate support sessions for students

10. How to make a comment, compliment or complaint about this SES or any aspects of experiences of WQE

Students should pursue this in accordance with the Complaints Procedure and contact their appropriate PPM or Welfare support staff and/or the EO officer on the Student Executive/council, Communications and Equality Officer.

Staff should refer to the Grievance Procedure available from the HR Department and contact their line manager or HR.

Parents /Carers and Members of the Public.

Parents/Carers should feel free to approach their child's welfare support staff or write to: The Principal, WQE University Road, LE1 7RJ.

Legislative Context to our Single Equality Scheme

Race Equality

The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Equality Act 2010 places a general duty on public authorities to advance race equality. Under the new duty, and through all relevant functions, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity for all races
- ensure good relations between people of different racial groups are fostered.
- seek to avoid unlawful discrimination before it occurs
- address lack of knowledge and raise awareness on different cultures
- have and maintain a written a scheme for promoting race equality, and have a three-year action plan and assess its success

Disability Equality

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 - referred to here as the DDA 2005 – places a general duty on public authorities to promote disability equality. Under the new duty in line with the Equality Act 2010, and through all relevant functions, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life

- take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others.

Gender

The Equality Act 2006 sets out a new positive duty on public bodies to promote gender equality. Under the new duty, in line with the Equality Act 2010, and through all relevant functions, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act and discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act
- advance equality of opportunity between men and women.

WQE is subject to the new duty and we

- consult our employees and stakeholders in drawing up our equality scheme and publish annual reports on equality matters.
- review the Scheme at least every three years.
- ensure equal pay arrangements are adhered to in line with current legislation.

Scheme impact

The effect of the scheme on the opportunities and barriers for people with disabilities, of different ethnicities and genders will be evaluated through:

- recruitment, retention, achievement and success and achievement records
- feedback through surveys, questionnaires, complaints and focus groups
- self assessment

Changes will be made as necessary.

In addition to the legislation referred to above, the following Regulations are also relevant to our SES:

- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Send code of practice 2014
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999
- Employment Equality Regulations - Sexual Orientation 2005
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Counter Terrorism and Security Bill 2015

Those Employment related regulations do not impose a positive duty to promote equality, but they do apply to employment and to the provision of further education. We must, therefore, ensure through our functions, policies and practices that we do not discriminate on any of these grounds.

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