

Equality & Diversity Policy

QAA recognises the positive benefits of Equality & Diversity and is committed to providing opportunities, products and services which embrace diversity, promotion of equality and inclusivity. We aim to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded into our day to day working practices with our employees, customers and partners.

1 Purpose and Scope

1.1 QAA is fully committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our employees, and eliminating unlawful and unfair discrimination.

Our aim is for our employees to be truly representative of all sections of society, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

We value the differences that a diverse workforce brings to the organisation and strive to be an organisation that is supportive, fair, just, and free from discrimination.

1.2 This policy is applicable to all QAA employees whether part time or full time on a substantive or fixed term contract, and also to associated persons such as, agency staff, reviewers, contractors and Committee members.

1.3 QAA will not discriminate on the grounds of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

1.4 QAA will oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

1.5 All employees are responsible for the promotion and advancement of this policy. Behaviour, actions or words that transgress the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the organisations Disciplinary Policy. QAA employees are expected to make an effort to ensure that visitors who attend QAA events adhere to the spirit of this policy.

1.6 All employees are expected to adhere to QAA's values of expertise, innovation, collaboration, accountability and integrity.

1.7 The Equality Act (2010) contains a public sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires public bodies and private bodies that deliver a public function, to consider the needs of protected groups (See 1.3), when designing and delivering services.

Although not covered by the Duty, QAA aims to adhere to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2 Our Commitment

QAA commits to:

2.1 Encouraging equality and diversity in the workplace through implementing activities, policies and processes that will embed good practice.

2.2 Create a working environment free from bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and contributions of all employees are recognised and valued.

This includes ensuring employees are aware of the Equality & Diversity Policy and have completed Equality and Diversity training. New starters are required to complete Equality and Diversity training as part of their induction. Additional Equality and Diversity training may be delivered when required.

All employees should understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

2.3 Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and / or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

2.4 Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all employees, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

2.5 Review employment practices when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of any changes in the law.

2.6 Monitor the workforce composition including ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability to ensure we are representative of our local demographic.

QAA will consider and take any appropriate action to address issues which may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

2.7 Consider any possible indirect discriminatory consequences of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the organisation considers it has good business reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so.

- 2.8 Comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. QAA will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices, when necessary, to overcome barriers caused by disability.
- 2.9 Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Further information on this can be found in the Recruitment Policy.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 Board

The Board retains oversight of QAA's approach to Equality & Diversity.

3.2 Executive

Executive owns the Equality & Diversity Policy, sets the direction for the organisation, safeguards legal compliance and ensures that the commitments are adhered to through management information.

3.3 Line Managers

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that their employees adhere to this policy and for ensuring equality of opportunity for their employees.

3.4 All Employees

Employees are obliged to adhere to the Equality & Diversity Policy. Employees are encouraged to notify Human Resources about any personal disabilities to enable us to make necessary adjustments.

3.5 Human Resources

The HR team is responsible for collecting, collating, monitoring and reporting on equality matters. Monitoring reports will be provided for the Executive and the Board and published where appropriate.

4 Grievances

- 4.1 If an employee considers that they may have been discriminated against, they may use QAA's grievance procedure to make a complaint. In the first instance the employee should discuss the matter with their line manager or a member of the HR team.

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