

# College Policy

# Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

November 2025



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

## 1: Policy Statement

South Essex College celebrates and values the diversity of our learners and employees and is committed to inclusion, equality of opportunity for all. The College is committed to the promotion and implementation of equal opportunities and positive attitudes towards diversity of staff and learners and seeks to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed regardless of their starting point. This Equality and diversity policy describes in a single document how the College will fulfil its statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and avoid discrimination

## 2. College Commitments

The College celebrates and values the diversity brought to its workforce and learner body by individuals regardless of any personal characteristics personal choices or disability and will treat all employees and students with respect and dignity and aim to ensure that all employees have equal opportunities for training and promotion. The College will work towards the elimination of discrimination conscious or otherwise and eliminate harassment to any employee. The college will aim to have up to date materials available to all to promote the understanding of any personal characteristics, personal choices, or disabilities.

### 2.1 In particular, the College strives to:

- a) Encourages the participation of learners of all abilities and differences
- b) Provide a safe and welcoming physical and learning environment
- c) Develop its facilities and courses to improve access and widen participation
- d) Offer support to meet individual learner and employee needs
- e) Ensure its recruitment process is fair and transparent and removes any potential barriers for individuals.
- f) Ensure that the College is an environment that is free from discrimination, bullying or harassment.

## 3.0 Purpose and Scope of the Equality Policy

The College's Equality Policy has the following main purposes:

- To ensure there is equality for all learners and potential learners when accessing services and provision offered by the College
- To ensure there is equality of opportunity for all learners in terms of outcomes
- To ensure there is equality for all current and potential employees of the College
- To promote positive attitudes towards equality and diversity
- To promote a working and learning environment that is free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation and where there are positive relations between

people of different racial groups, cultures, religions, ages, sexuality, abilities and disabilities, choice of identification and all genders and reassignments.

- To meet legal requirements

This Policy applies to all members of the College's community, including various agencies and others with whom the College works.

This is the overarching policy on equality and diversity that applies across all areas of the College, including, employment, teaching, learning and assessing, procurement and marketing and admissions. This policy should not be read in isolation but cross referenced and with all associated policies, procedure and practices, as listed herein.

#### **4. Legal Framework**

The Equality Act 2010 brought together all the legal requirements on equality that the private, public and voluntary sectors need to follow. It affects equality law at work and in delivering services.

The message (or purpose) of the Equality Act is that everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work or when using services. It protects people from discrimination on the basis of certain characteristics. These are known as protected characteristics, and they vary slightly according to whether a person is at work or using a service. All employers and service providers have a responsibility under the law to treat their employees and service users fairly.

There are nine personal characteristics that are protected under the legislation: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

#### **5. The main forms of Prohibited conduct are:**

##### **Discrimination:**

Treating a person less favourably than someone else because of a protected characteristic (known as direct discrimination).

Putting in place a rule or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified (known as indirect discrimination).

Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability when this cannot be justified (known as discrimination arising from disability).

Failing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

**Harassment:**

Unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which is hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to someone with a protected characteristic or in a way that is sexual in nature.

**Victimisation:**

Treating someone unfavourably because they have taken (or might be taking) action under the Equality Act or supporting somebody who is doing so. As well as these characteristics, the law also protects people from being discriminated against:

- By someone who wrongly perceives them to have one of the protected characteristics.
- Because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. This includes the parent of a disabled child or adult or someone else who is caring for a disabled person.

**6. Public Sector Equality Duty**

The Equality Act places a duty on public sector employers, including the College to do three things:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty.

The Act helpfully explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.

Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The duty covers eight of the nine protected characteristics (excluding marriage or civil partnership). However, the College needs to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status.

## 7. Equality Act Specific Duties

The specific duties require the College to:

**Publication of Information:** Publish relevant, proportionate information that demonstrates their compliance with the Equality Duty by 31 January.

**Setting Equality Objectives:**

Set specific, measurable equality objectives at least every four years effective from 6 April 2012. These objectives should be aimed at improving equality outcomes and addressing any disparities identified in the published information.

**Monitoring and Reporting:** Monitor the impact of their policies and practices on different groups and report on their progress towards achieving their equality objectives.

All information must be published in a way that is easily accessible to the public. The College currently publishes annual data on our workforce and Learner population. This data is made available on our website.

## 8 Responsibilities

**All Staff are responsible for:**

- Complying with equalities legislation and College, policies, procedures, and systems. Informing themselves of the College's statutory duties regarding equality legislation and to inform themselves of the content and implications of the Equality Policy and to put the Policy into practice.
- Adhering to the College's equality and diversity, policies, procedures, and systems.
- Ensuring that equality and diversity is promoted to learners at all appropriate times including through induction, tutorials and classroom practice
- Promoting equality and diversity and challenging prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour and language by students, work placement providers, outside contractors or other members of staff whenever practicable.
- Attending mandatory training in equality and diversity and keeping up to date with equalities legislation by attending training events and taking note of related information organised and disseminated by the College.

**All managers are also responsible for:**

- Complying with equalities legislation and College, policies, procedures, and systems. Ensuring that equality and diversity is promoted to learners through induction, tutorials, and classroom practice, including acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.
- Ensuring that staff recruitment is completed without prejudice, conscious or unconscious and ensuring we are adhering to our status of being a disability confident employer.

### **The Executive Team are responsible for:**

- Ensuring the College's Strategic Framework includes a commitment to and promotes equality and diversity.
- Creating and leading a positive, inclusive culture in the College that promotes equality, diversity, and challenges prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour by learners, staff (including agency workers, sub-contractors, and volunteers) and others working with or accessing College services.
- Ensuring the College is compliant with equalities legislation and has effective equalities, policies, procedures, and systems in place for staff, learners and others accessing College services.
- Ensuring that equalities, policies, procedures, and systems are properly developed, implemented, and monitored within the College.
- Raising awareness of equality and diversity across the College and ensuring mandatory equality and diversity training is planned and provided for all staff and members of the Corporation.
- Raising awareness of equality and diversity within the Learner population and ensuring students are aware of their responsibilities.

### **Corporation – Members of the Corporation are responsible for:**

- Working towards ensuring Corporation Membership reflects the diversity of the college's local communities and its Learner population
- Ensuring there is a Strategic Framework that fosters a positive ethos about equality and diversity and the elimination of discrimination and ensuring that the College's Development Plan includes a commitment to equality and diversity.
- Ensuring the College complies with equalities legislation including the general and specific duties.
- Receiving reports on equality and diversity for staff and students so as to inform the carrying out of responsibilities and in doing so to be able to challenge the Principals and others as and when appropriate.
- Ensuring they are aware of the Corporation's statutory responsibilities in relation to equalities legislation as an employer and service provider
- Self-assessing their practice annually with regard to equality and diversity in relation to how the Corporation operates in meeting the statutory and regularity requirements
- Attending Equality and Diversity training as appropriate.

### **Students are responsible for:**

- Ensuring they comply with the College's equality policies and behave appropriately towards other students, staff, and members of the College community.

Ensuring they are aware of their responsibilities to report any incidents of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation either directed at them or that they are witness to.

## 9. Collecting, Monitoring and Using Data

### Workforce data

- Equalities legislation requires the College to collect and monitor data on a range of workforce activities.
- The HR department is responsible for monitoring a range of employment data by age, gender, ethnicity and disability. Year-on-year comparisons of the College's profile are analysed as well as comparisons made against the FE Sector nationally, using FE Sector benchmarks.
- Results of monitoring are used to assess the effectiveness of the Equality Policy and to set targets and action plans for improvement.
- The College's Workforce Profile Report is presented to the Corporation annually and published on the College's website. Learner Data

### Learner Data

- The College collects and monitors a range of data on students and applicants to the College. Data is collected for age, gender, ethnicity and disability at application and enrolment.
- It is the responsibility of all managers of the curriculum, to monitor Learner performance data and in particular success, retention and achievement rates, by age, gender, ethnicity and disability. All curriculum teams participate in self-assessment and set improvement targets in self-assessment action plans.

## 10. Implementation Arrangements

Team members and students/apprentices and their employers are to be made aware of this policy and procedure. New team members and students/apprentices are to be made aware of this policy and procedure during the formal College induction process. Updated and amended procedures will be disseminated and reinforced in training sessions and team meeting, and as part of teaching, learning and assessing practice.

This policy is made available on the College intranet, Learner Moodle messages, and on the College website. This is therefore available to team members, students/apprentices and their parents / guardians, sub-contractors and agency workers, along with anyone accessing our premises or services will also have access. Other formats can be made available by contacting [departmentofhumanresources@southessex.ac.uk](mailto:departmentofhumanresources@southessex.ac.uk)

## 11. **Monitoring and Review**

The Equality Policy will be reviewed annually, following consultation with appropriate staff to ensure continued compliance with equalities legislation and to ensure all College strategies, policies, procedures, systems, and functions remain non-discriminatory.

The Policy will be monitored through the College's Equality & Diversity Group. Reports from the group will be taken to the College's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or others as appropriate.

<b>Senior Leadership Responsibility</b>	Principal & Chief Executive
<b>Policy Author</b>	Director, People & Organisational Development
<b>Roles Responsible for Reviewing</b>	Director, People & Organisational Development
<b>Issue date of current version</b>	29 August 2022
<b>Date to be reviewed</b>	25 November 2026
<b>Type of Policy</b>	Public / Internal