



Policy Document

Equality, diversity and inclusion policy



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Introduction

Aspire Qualifications Limited (AQ) is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.

AQ believes that everyone should be treated fairly and with respect and dignity, no matter their background or circumstances. AQ recognises that every person is an individual with different needs, preferences and abilities.

We aim to reflect this diversity in everything we do, including offering reasonable adjustments for our assessments, where these are appropriate, to accommodate difference.

Aims

Our aims seek to represent all sections of society. Each employee and associate should feel respected and able to give of their best. Those assisting in the delivery of our qualifications should be aware of and adhere to equality, diversity and inclusion principles that guide us so that users of our qualifications should not experience any form of discrimination when interacting with us.

We recognise that all have a right to equality of opportunity, and we are particularly mindful of the protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act 2010.

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/protected-characteristics>

We encourage our stakeholders to contact us if they feel that any aspect of our assessment arrangements or support materials may have discriminated users with a particular protected characteristic.

AQ has a commitment to a set of principles that:

- Recognises and seeks to redress inequality and disadvantage wherever possible
- Treats all in a fair, open and honest manner
- Recognises the right of learners
- Promotes equality of opportunity
- Encourages its workforce and the organisation as a whole to be more responsive to the needs of learners
- Communicate and share information effectively with our learners, employees and contractors
- Be transparent and honest in our dealings with each other
- Respond to regulation and changing environments

Definitions

- Direct discrimination
 - Treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others.
- Indirect discrimination
 - Putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage.
 - harassment - unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them.
- Disability discrimination
 - Disability discrimination is when a person is treated less well or put at a disadvantage for a reason that relates to their disability in one of the situations covered by the Equality Act <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010> including failure to consider and make Reasonable Adjustments in line with our Reasonable Adjustments Policy. The discrimination does not have to be intentional to be unlawful.

Scope

This policy is aimed at all learners taking our qualifications and any assessment and delivery centres who deliver our qualifications to learners as well as any person/s who has input or involvement in our qualifications.

The policy will be used and referenced by our staff and associates to ensure that they are dealing with all requests for reasonable adjustments and qualification-related enquiries in a fair and consistent manner, and in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Our commitment to staff

To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff are recognised, upheld and valued:

- All members of staff will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential
- All staff and associates are entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all
- No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated
- Any training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff on the basis of appropriateness and organisational need



We will regularly review all our employment practices, and particularly our recruitment procedures, to ensure fairness. Any breaches of equality, diversity and inclusion principles will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Governance

This policy is supported and approved by the Governing Body of AQ and actively encourages participation to reflect in the diversity of our staff, associates, learners and other stakeholders.

We expect a similar level of commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion from external organisations we engage with in the delivery of our services.

Publicity and social media marketing

The image we project in our promotional materials, advertising and public relations activity aims to send a message about our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Publicity and social media marketing will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it is:

- Non-discriminatory to any group or individual
- Provided in hard copy and electronic forms to ensure that information is widely available and accessible by individuals with a range of needs
- Confers a positive image of an environment which welcomes all for education and qualifications

Assessment development and delivery

AQ, staff and associates recognise their personal role in making AQ a genuinely open and inclusive organisation. Through the assessment design, development and delivery we will consider diverse needs so that our assessment is manageable for all as long as it doesn't affect the integrity or standard of the assessment.

Bias

Bias is a predisposition or prejudice for or against one person or groups of people in a way that is unfair.

Bias in assessment may mean that marks and grades given are based on unfair decisions as judgement may be skewed towards a certain group of learners more than others or that assessment is not entirely objective, meaning that the outcome is not based clearly on a set of agreed measures such as specified within a mark scheme.



We operate robust standardisation procedures so that our associates can make valid and fair decisions and expect our approved centres to operate their own marking, standardisation and internal quality assurance to safeguard the standard of the assessment and its outcomes.

We reserve the right to request evidence of marking and standardisation procedures from our Approved Centres.

Implicit or unconscious bias

This is a term that communicates the connections we hold, outside of our conscious awareness and control.

Unconscious bias is triggered by our brain automatically making quick judgments of a person or thing and are influenced by our own beliefs, background, personal experiences, societal stereotypes and cultural perspective.

It is about more than decisions made on gender, ethnicity, or other visible diversity characteristics; many other things can also trigger unconscious bias.

For example, within a remote assessment, we may find ourselves judging an environment in which a learner is undertaking assessment, they in turn could be also judging one of our associates who are assessing them.

Being aware of the potential for this is covered within our staff and associate training.

Policy updating and reviewing

We monitor our policies on an ongoing basis to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and responsive.

All policies relating to AQ will be updated on an 18-month cycle or sooner as required. Earlier policy updates will take place in response to any regulatory change, resulting legislation or feedback received, that dictates the need to conduct an earlier review.

Our policy review process also forms part of AQ's continuous improvement monitoring and self-assessment arrangements.

Policy version and owner

Policy version	October 2024
Policy review date	April 2026
Policy owner	Responsible Officer



Regulatory references	Condition D1 - Fitness for purpose of qualifications Condition D2 - Accessibility of qualifications Condition G6: Arrangements for Reasonable Adjustments Condition G7: Arrangements for Special Consideration The Equality Act 2010
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