

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

September 2024

Version 9



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1. Introduction

This policy aims to outline the commitment of VTCT Skills to ensuring equality of opportunity and equal treatment for employees, contractors, workers, trustees, and customers in terms of employment and access to services; and to provide guidance on anti-discriminatory practice. This policy is non-contractual.

This policy also sets out the commitment of VTCT Skills to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and to the principles of equality and diversity both as an employer and in the development, delivery and awarding of qualifications.

1.1. Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 combined more than 116 pieces of equality legislation into one Act, providing a legal framework which tackles discrimination in respect of the following personal characteristics, which are protected by the law:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- race;
- religion or belief (there are some education exceptions where there is valid segregation);
- sex (there are some education exceptions where there is valid segregation);
- sexual orientation; and
- pregnancy and maternity.

It defines the behaviour that is unlawful under the Act as:

- direct discrimination;
- indirect discrimination;
- discrimination arising from disability;
- victimisation; or
- harassment.

Section 53 of the Act refers specifically to awarding organisations, requiring them not to discriminate, harass or victimise a person in relation to the conferment or withdrawal of a qualification.

1.2. Policy Statement

VTCT Skills:

- is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in employment and access to services for all who work for or with it;
- values and celebrates differences in age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity;
- believes that all forms of prejudice and discrimination are unacceptable, and will strive vigorously to tackle these and to remove conditions which place people at a disadvantage;
- works to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination;
- provides equality of opportunity as an integral part of good practice;
- is committed to a working environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully recognized and valued;
- supports staff and contractors in challenging any inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour from colleagues, other individuals, organisations and customers.

VTCT Skills will provide equality of opportunity and equal treatment as an integral part of good practice. The organisation is committed to a working environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully valued and recognised. We will support our employees, workers, trustees, contractors, and learners in not tolerating any inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour from colleagues, other organisations, or customers.

2. Scope

This policy is provided for VTCT Skills employees, approved centres and learners using VTCT Skills products and services.

This policy applies to current employees, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors; it also applies to workers, trustees, contractors and customers in terms of service provision. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts), and on work-related trips or events including social events.

3. Responsibilities

VTCT Skills values its employees, workers, contractors, trustees and customers, and expects them to be treated in a respectful manner. Accordingly, all have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect.

VTCT Skills is responsible for ensuring that its staff and contractors are aware of this policy, current equality legislation and regulatory requirements in relation to equality and diversity.

The head of centre is responsible for ensuring that its staff, contractors, and learners are aware of this policy, current equality legislation and regulatory requirements in relation to equality and diversity.

Within VTCT Skills the People Team are responsible for providing advice and guidance on equality and diversity issues to all stakeholders and ensure the policy document is kept up to date and in line with regulatory requirements

3.1. Regulatory authorities

This policy addresses the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities' criteria.

3.2. Review arrangements

This policy is reviewed annually as part of VTCT Skills' self-evaluation activity, which includes consideration of legal updates and feedback. A policy review may also be triggered as an action resulting from the outcome of the investigation of a complaint.

4. Definitions

VTCT Skills' commitment to anti-discriminatory practice relates to all kinds of discrimination, as set out below:

- Direct discrimination – where someone is treated less favourably than another because they have a protected characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination – when a provision, criteria or practice is applied to everyone which has a detrimental effect on a particular group or individual with a particular protected characteristic than others and is not justified. This applies even if there was not a deliberate intention to discriminate.
- Associative discrimination – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who has a protected characteristic.
- Perceptive discrimination – direct discrimination against someone because others think they have a protected characteristic even if they do not possess that characteristic.
- Disability discrimination – this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.
- Harassment – unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. This applies even if the conduct is not directed at the individual or if they do not have the protected characteristic. Harassment is dealt with further in the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

- Third party harassment – potential liability for the harassment of employees by others such as clients or customers.
- Victimisation – when someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint under the Equalities Act, or it is thought that they have done so.

5. Employment

VTCT Skills is committed to ensuring that personnel are recruited, selected, monitored and can progress within the organisation in a fair and equitable manner, based on their attributes, skills, experience and performance.

VTCT Skills aims to promote equality and diversity as an employer and to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable in the context of the policy. Recruitment, promotion and other selection exercises, such as redundancy selection, will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. If possible, more than one person should do Shortlisting.

Vacancies should generally be advertised to a diverse section of the labour market. Advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

Job applicants should not be asked questions, which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children, how old they are, or any other questions related to protected characteristics.

Job applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, except in the very limited circumstances allowed by law: for example, to check that the applicant could perform an intrinsic part of the job (taking account of any reasonable adjustments), or to see if any adjustments might be needed at interview because of a disability. Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check. Health or disability questions may be included in equal opportunities monitoring forms, which must not be used for selection or decision-making purposes.

Selection, recruitment, training, promotion, and employment practices will be subject to regular review to ensure that they comply with this Policy.

VTCT Skills regards discrimination, abuse, harassment, victimisation or bullying of employees, contractors, workers, customers or others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct. Any discrimination, abuse, harassment, victimisation, or bullying will be dealt with as per our Disciplinary Policy (1POHR07).

Employees who believe they have suffered discrimination can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure (1POHR10) or Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy (1POHR04). Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

VTCT Skills takes a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure (1POHR07). Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

Employee's must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, any employee who is found to have made a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure (1POHR07).

5.1. Part-time, Temporary, Fixed-term, and Zero-Hour work

Part-time, temporary, and fixed-term employees should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

5.2. Disabilities

If an employee is disabled or becomes disabled, we encourage the employee to tell VTCT Skills about their condition so that VTCT Skills can consider what reasonable adjustments or support may be appropriate.

6. VTCT Skills as a Service Provider

In developing its qualifications, including but not limited to; record of assessment books, qualification specification and materials, or its awarding organisation services (registration, entry, assessment, certification or web interfaces to the services), VTCT Skills will seek to ensure access to its customers and their learners. This will include, wherever practicable, making specific access arrangements for its customers, and their learners to whom any protected characteristics may apply. VTCT Skills will attempt to ensure that none of its policies discriminate directly or indirectly against any group or individual.

We encourage any individual to whom a protected characteristic may apply to inform us so that we can consider what reasonable adjustments or support may be appropriate.

6.1. Qualifications

VTCT Skills ensures that:

- its qualifications are suitable for as diverse a range of learners as possible;
- it adheres to regulatory conditions relating to the development, delivery, assessment and awarding of VTCT Skills qualifications, to ensure that qualifications contain no bias in content which might discriminate against or disadvantage any groups of learners sharing a particular characteristic, in terms of language, content or means of assessment, other than those directly related to the purpose of the units or qualifications;
- if any such features or barriers of this type are necessary, their nature and the reason for their inclusion in the particular unit or qualification are clearly set out. Staff responsible for inducting learners on to qualifications must be fully briefed of such features.

New qualifications put forward for approval are scrutinised for the above before they are added to the portfolio.

6.2.Centres

VTCT Skills ensures equality of opportunity for learners registered on its qualifications by requiring centres to demonstrate as part of the approval process that:

- current equality legislation is adhered to;
- there is an up-to-date equality and diversity policy in place;
- staff and learners are aware of and have access to the equality and diversity policy;
- assessment processes are carried out in a fair and objective manner;
- an appeals policy and procedure is in place;
- staff and learners are aware of and have access to the appeals policy and procedure;
- Learner / candidate results are monitored in line with the centre's equality and diversity policy;
- equipment and accommodation used for learning and assessment create no barriers to access for any candidate; and
- reasonable adjustments and special consideration(s) are made in line with VTCT Skills' policy and procedures.

Document amendment history page

Version	Document Owner	Issue Date	Changes	Role
7	HR Advisor	April 2023	Updated template	HR Advisor
8	HR Advisor	January 2024	Amalgamation of Diversity and Equality Policy (HR) and Equality and Diversity Policy (AD) into one policy	HR Advisor
9	HR Advisor	September 2024	Updated template	HR Advisor

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Document Sign-off

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HR Advisor	September 2024