

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1. Introduction

UECS Ltd believes that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work. We have adopted an equal opportunities policy which commits the company to fair, unbiased and objective employment practices and a work environment which is free of harassment and victimisation. The aim of the policy is to encourage harmony and respect amongst individuals so as to promote good working practices with a view to maximising the performance and the return to the Employer and the employees.

2. The Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

UECS Ltd recognises the value of diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity within the University. We expect staff to be treated with dignity and respect and solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, political beliefs and affiliations, family circumstances or other irrelevant distinction.

3. Commitment and responsibilities

The Equal Opportunities Statement is designed to reinforce the commitment of UECS Ltd to fairness and equality of opportunity. It is the responsibility of every employee to ensure his or her own conduct conforms to the expected standards and reflects this Policy Statement. For this reason, acceptance of and adherence to, the Company's equal opportunities policy form part of every employee's contract of employment. Equal Opportunities is taken very seriously by the Company and wilful failure to apply the policies or evidence of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation will result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

4 Working practices

4.1 Recruitment and selection

Good equality and diversity practice i.e. fairness, objectivity and transparency, must be applied to the recruitment and selection process for all posts regardless of whether they are permanent, fixed-term, temporary or casual. Reasonable adjustments will be made as required during the recruitment and selection process.

4.2 Training

Managers should ensure that all staff have equal access to training and development opportunities and that decisions taken do not discriminate on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics. This includes decisions taken about who can attend training courses or events, time away from the workplace to attend training courses or events and decisions regarding funding for training and development.

Wherever possible, arrangements should be made to ensure that part-time staff have the same opportunities to attend training and developmental events and activities as full-time staff. Training arrangements must also take into account the needs of disabled staff and those with caring responsibilities.

4.3 Work environment

UECS Ltd encourages all members of staff to contribute fully, and on an equal basis. The working environment must be supportive of the dignity and self esteem of individuals and free from harassment.

4.4 Service Providers

UECS Ltd will ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the tender process and seek to ensure that potential contractors have an effective equality policy.

5. The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) replaced the majority of previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of 'protected characteristics'.

The protected characteristics under the Act are:-

- **age**
- **disability** (a detailed definition can be found in B.7)
- **gender reassignment** (defined as 'where a person has proposed, started or completed the process to change his or her sex'. Individuals do not have to be under medical supervision to be protected by the law). A transsexual person has the PC of gender reassignment.
- **marriage and civil partnership**
- **pregnancy and maternity**
- **race**
- **religion or belief** (religion is defined as 'any religion, including a lack of religion', belief is defined as 'a religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief')
- **sex**
- **sexual orientation** (defined as person's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex or persons of either sex. This means the Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people)

Staff must avoid discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristic mentioned in the Equal Opportunities Policy, which includes those mentioned in the Act.

5.1 Types of Discrimination

There are four types of discrimination; direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation. All of these are illegal and are defined under the Act as follows:-

5.2 Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (discrimination by perception), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (discrimination by association). Under the Act, disabled people are protected from discrimination 'arising from disability' which occurs when someone has been treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability as opposed to 'because of' the disability itself.

5.3 Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when a rule, policy or practice is neutral on the face of it but its impact particularly disadvantages people who share a particular protected characteristic.

5.4 Harassment

Harassment is defined as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

5.5 Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated detrimentally because they have made a complaint about discrimination or harassment or have given evidence relating to such a complaint or because they are suspected of doing so.

6. Policy relating to specific protected characteristics

6.1 Disability

A disabled person is defined in the Act as someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The Equality Act 2010 provides for certain people to meet the definition of disability without having to show that they have an impairment that has (or is likely to have) a substantial, adverse long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes people who have cancer, HIV infection, multiple sclerosis and people who are certified as blind, partially sighted, severely sight impaired or sight impaired by a consultant ophthalmologist

UECS Ltd welcomes and encourages applications from people with a disability and is committed to promoting positive attitudes towards disability and to equality of opportunity for disabled staff.

Under the Equality Act 2010 UECS Ltd is required to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that disabled people are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in relation to their non-disabled peers. A 'substantial disadvantage' is one that is more than minor or trivial. In determining what is 'reasonable,' UECS Ltd will take into account factors such as effectiveness and cost. Effectiveness and practicality will be considered first and then the cost and resources available to fund it will be considered.

6.2 Religion or belief

All staff, regardless of whether they have a religion or belief or not, are required to work in accordance with their contract. Members of staff are encouraged to approach their line manager to request a change in their working arrangements in order to carry out acts of religious observance such as prayer.

If a member of staff wishes to take part in a religious festival, day of observance or pilgrimage, they should request annual leave. Staff making such requests should give as much notice as possible, ideally at the beginning of the leave year. If an individual has insufficient annual leave remaining, the manager could allow unpaid leave, for all or part of the period, on the first occasion and ask the member of staff to book annual leave on any similar future occasions.

6.3 Freedom of speech

The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is absolute, but the right to manifest beliefs is qualified by the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others. UECS Ltd will seek to ensure that freedom of speech, debate and expressions within the law is secured for all staff. All staff, and visitors are expected to comply with the requirements of the [Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006](#) which gives people protection from harm because of their religious beliefs or lack of religious beliefs.

6.4 Gender Reassignment

Staff who have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment will receive positive support from UECS Ltd to meet their particular needs and the Company will ensure that those who have undergone, or who are undergoing, gender reassignment, are treated in all respects as the gender in which they live.

6.5 Marriage and Civil Partnership

Civil partners are entitled to the same employment rights and benefits as those of married couples. UECS Ltd extends those rights and benefits to same-sex partners regardless of whether they are civil partners or not, except where the law or the arrangements of other agencies do not permit such equal treatment.