



Equal Opportunities Policy

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1. Statement of Policy

QA recognises it is essential to provide equal opportunities to all people without discrimination and we are committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

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

To this end, the purpose of the QA Equal Opportunities Policy is that:

- We will not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
- We will provide equality, fairness and respect for everyone in our employment – whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
- We will oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination, including those incurred through 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 development opportunities.

2. Company Responsibility

QA is committed not only to its legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment, as this is good practice and makes business sense.

To this end, QA will:

- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- In order to make sure we are meeting the aims and commitments set out in the QA Equal Opportunity Policy, we will monitor* the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity**.

* monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, is working in practice. We will review these annually and considering what action should be taken to address any issues.

** where necessary, employees will be able to check/correct their own record of these details. Otherwise, access to this information will be strictly restricted.

- Make decisions concerning staff career development and promotion based solely on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Make reasonable adjustments within the workplace for those employees who become disabled during employment or for disabled applicants at recruitment.

3. Recruitment and Promotion

- Advertisements for posts will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability for the post. Information about vacant posts will be provided in such a way that does not restrict its audience in terms of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics.
- Recruitment literature will not imply a preference for one group of applicants (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- When applicable, vacancies will be circulated internally.
- All job descriptions and person specifications for posts will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.
- All selection will be thorough, merit based and conducted against defined criteria and will deal only with the applicant's suitability for the job. If it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to job requirements and asked to all candidates.
- Wherever possible, more than one person must be involved in the selection, interview and recruitment process and the reasons for selection and rejection of applicants for vacancies must be recorded.

4. Training

QA is committed to providing training for managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff should understand they (the employee), as well as QA (the 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.

QA will:

- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, 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.
- Encourage all employees to discuss their development and training, career aspirations with their Line Manager.

5. Grievances and Victimisation

- QA will 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 company's disciplinary and/or grievance procedures and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.
- Further to this, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

6. Employee Responsibility

It is the employee's responsibility to familiarise themselves with and to adhere to this policy. Managers will support the employee and provide updates as and when they arise.

7. Responsibility to Learners

QA is committed to providing equal opportunities for all learners to undertake training courses and assessments in line with the Equality Act 2010 and all other applicable regulations and legislation (e.g. Qualification-specific requirements for regulated qualifications, HSE regulations and restrictions).

When requested and if possible, we will make sure reasonable adjustments are made for learners with specific needs so they may undertake training and assessments on a fair and equitable basis with all other learners. For to assessment outcomes, special consideration will be given to those who have experienced temporary injury, illness and/or health or well-being issues at the time of assessment.

QA will also make sure all learners are given the opportunity to undertake training courses and assessments in an environment that is free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, unlawful discrimination and where dignity and respect for all is actively promoted.