



# Equality and Diversity Policy

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# Equality and Diversity Policy

## 1. Purpose

Open Awards is committed to being an equal opportunities organisation. It is our aim to provide equality of opportunities within the organisation and in all products and services we provide. We aim to ensure that all our approved centres comply with our aims in providing our products and services to learners.

Where Open Awards works with End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) to deliver our External Quality Assurance contract with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) we expect those organisations to have robust Equality and Diversity Policies in place that comply with IFATE, Ofqual and ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) requirements.

We oppose all unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of ability, age, colour, culture, disability, domestic circumstances, employment status, gender, marital/civil partnership status, nationality, political orientation, racial origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, social background or any other grounds or status.

We will also ensure that no discrimination occurs in relation to all of the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

## 2. Scope

This document is applicable for the following Open Awards products:

- ✓ Ofqual regulated qualifications and units
- ✓ Access to HE Diplomas
- ✓ Quality Endorsed Courses
- ✓ EQA Services
- ✓ End Point Assessment Services

## 3. Regulatory Authorities

The relevant regulatory authorities are Ofqual and Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Every attempt has been made to ensure that the provisions of this document are consistent with the requirements of the regulatory authorities.

Where the requirements of a regulatory authority change, or where inadvertently these procedures conflict with those of the regulatory authority, the latter shall apply. Where the requirements of the regulatory authority are amended and require changes to this document, such changes will be made as soon as practicable and Open Awards will inform centres accordingly.

Open Awards also provides contractual External Quality Assurance services to the IFATE and every attempt has been made to ensure that the provisions of this document are consistent with the requirements of the IFATE. Where the requirements of the IFATE or ESFA change in relation to that contract the latter shall apply.

Where the requirements of the IFATE and/or ESFA are amended and require changes to this document, such changes will be made as soon as practicable and Open Awards will inform EPAOs accordingly.

Where additional services are commissioned from Open Awards the contractual terms shall apply until such time as this policy is amended.

#### **4. Audience**

This document is for use by the following:

- Provider staff responsible for curriculum development, quality assurance and administration of Open Awards qualifications
  
- EPAOs
  
- Open Awards
  - All staff
  - Trustees and committee members
  - Access to HE Pathway Moderators
  - External Quality Assurers
  - Specialist EQA Reviewers
  - Examiners
  - Remote Invigilators

## 5. Definitions

Equality	Ensuring everybody has an equal opportunity, and is not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics.
Diversity	Taking account of the differences between people and groups of people, and placing a positive value on those differences.
Equality of opportunity	Ensuring everybody has an equal chance to take up opportunities and also to make full use of the opportunities on offer and to fulfil their potential.
Protected characteristics	<p>Specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. The 'protection' relates to protection from discrimination. The nine protected characteristics are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Gender Reassignment</li> <li>• Marriage and Civil Partnership</li> <li>• Pregnancy and Maternity</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Religion and Belief</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation</li> </ul>

## 6. Policy

Open Awards aim to ensure that equality and diversity are promoted in the development of our products and in access to our products and services, and that unlawful or unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, is eliminated.

We recognise that all employees, representatives and staff at approved providers have a responsibility to comply with the intentions of this policy and provide staff training and guidance as necessary.

EPAOS are expected to have robust similar policies in place and provide staff training and guidance as necessary.

Open Awards will ensure that:

- the widest possible diversity of learners can access the content and assessment of our products and services
- entry requirements, content and assessment demands of products and services will be appropriate to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified and do not act as unnecessary barriers to achievement
- all products and services allow for the fair assessment of all learners
- language used in all materials is clear, free from bias and appropriate to the target group
- we aim to produce materials that do not cause offence
- all products and services are reviewed against this policy
- our staff and other representatives are trained to identify issues relating to equality and diversity especially in the application of assessment
- we will always act fairly when working with centres and learners
- we will always support and demonstrate the principles of diversity and equality
- approved providers are aware of their responsibilities in ensuring ongoing compliance with this policy
- EPA policies and methods of assessment do not have any adverse or potential adverse effect on any group of learners and take full account of individual apprentice needs

## **7. Responsibility of centres**

Open Awards approved providers are required to:

- ensure that all processes concerned with assessment are carried out in a fair and objective manner
- adhere to current legislation regarding equality and diversity
- operate an effective equality and diversity policy, with which learners are familiar and which applied to all learners using our products and services
- operate an effective appeals procedure, with which learners are familiar and which is applied to all learners using Open Awards products and services
- ensure that all learners and staff involved in the design, delivery, management, assessment and quality assurance of our products are aware of, and familiar with, the contents of this policy.

## **8. Responsibility of EPAOs**

Open Awards will monitor through their external quality assurance procedures that EPAOs are ensuring:

- ESFA and IFATE requirements are met
- they adhere to current legislation regarding equality and diversity
- the needs of individual apprentices are met

## 9. Monitoring and Review

Open Awards will review this policy bi-annually as part of its self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer and learner feedback, changes in its practices, advice from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.

As part of the monitoring of learners registering on Open Awards qualifications we will collect information on diversity, requests for special considerations, access arrangements and feedback from learners, providers and other stakeholders. Should issues be identified which suggest that products or services may have unnecessarily impacted on learners, we will review our provision to consider amendments to units, qualifications and internal procedures as necessary.

## 10. Related documents

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the following Open Awards documents:

- Provider Agreement
- Provider Handbook
- Access to HE Provider Handbook
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy and Procedures
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedures

## 11. Regulatory Requirements

The Equality and Diversity Policy is designed to fulfil the requirements of our Regulators, specifically:

### Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition

- C2 Arrangements with centres (providers)
- D1 Fitness for purpose of qualifications
- D2 Accessibility of qualifications
- G2 Language of the assessment
- G3 Use of language and Stimulus Materials

### QAA The Access to Higher Education Diploma specification 2018

50, 94

### The IFATE Equality and Diversity Plan