

# Equality & Diversity Policy

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## 1.0 Introduction

BCNO is committed to promoting equal opportunities, eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst its workforce and student body. It aims to have a workforce and student body that is representative of all sections of society and a shared value of the differences that a diverse workforce brings. We are committed to treating equally all individuals in any capacity regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation (**Protected Characteristics**).

### 1.1 Purpose

This policy sets out our approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination of job applicants, employees and students. It applies to all aspects of employment and study with us, including recruitment, admission, pay and conditions, training, appraisals, promotion, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

This policy covers all students, employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns, casual workers and agency workers.

## 2.0 Policy

### 2.1 Responsibility for this Policy

The Senior Management Team has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the Head of HR.

All managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the BCNO's aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities and diversity. Managers will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness, recruitment and selection best practice.

BCNO requires and expects all staff and students to assist BCNO in its commitment to provide and promote equality and diversity in the organisation.

You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, job applicants, students, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. 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.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

- **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. Direct discrimination also includes Discrimination by Association which is treating someone less favourably because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic; and Perception Discrimination which is discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular Protected Characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that Characteristic.
- **Indirect discrimination:** a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others and is not justified.
- **Harassment:** this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. This also includes

Harassment by Others which is when employees, other workers or students are harassed by individuals outside the organization. Harassment is further dealt with in our Dignity at Work Policy.

- **Victimisation:** retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Staff and students can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, BCNO for any act of unlawful discrimination.

All staff will be provided with equality and diversity training.

## **2.2 Recruitment and Selection**

Recruitment, admission, promotion, and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. Shortlisting will be done, as far as possible, by more than one person and with the involvement of HR (for staff) or Admissions Team (for students), where possible. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly.

We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to as diverse a labour market as possible.

Job and student applicants will not be asked questions which might suggest any intention to discriminate on the grounds of a Protected Characteristic.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job or study offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used with the approval of the Head of HR. For example, questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments) and equal opportunities monitoring to enable BCNO to ensure we avoid discrimination and continuously improve our equality and diversity.

BCNO is required by law to ensure that all individuals are eligible to work and/or study in the UK. All prospective employees and students, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) upon request to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from HR or UK Visas and Immigration.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, BCNO monitors the diversity of applicants. Provision of this information is voluntary, and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment or studies. The information is removed from applications before shortlisting and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy.

## **2.3 Training, Promotion and Conditions of Service/Study**

Training needs will be identified through regular appraisals and/or changes in job content. Employees will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

BCNO's conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to everyone who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

## 2.4 Termination of Employment

BCNO will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

It will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

## 2.5 Disabilities

If an employee possesses a disability, he/she should talk to his/her line manager or the Head of HR so that support can be provided, as appropriate. BCNO will take all reasonable steps to accommodate an employee's needs. However, if BCNO considers a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, then those reasons will be explained, and efforts will be made to find an alternative solution where possible.

BCNO monitors the physical features of its premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary and possible, BCNO will take reasonable steps to improve access.

## 2.6 Breaches of this Policy

BCNO takes a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy. Serious cases of discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

If an employee believes he/she has suffered discrimination, then please raise the matter through our Grievance Policy or through our Dignity at Work Policy as appropriate. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff who complain about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Policy.

## 2.7 Related Policies

This policy is supported by the following policies:

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Single Equality Scheme

## 3.0 Auditing

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Policy Name:   | Equality & Diversity   |
| Policy Owner:  | Human Resources        |
| Policy Approver:   | Head of HR             |
| Audience:  | All staff and students |
| Storage Location:  | Intranet – HR          |
| Effective Date:  | 07.2023                |
| Review Date:<br>(Unless other revisions are required prior to this date) | 07.2024                |
| Version:   | V1.1 Approved          |

|                             |   |  |   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Equality Impact Assessment: | Are there any implications for a protected characteristic group as defined by the Equality Act 2010 in this policy? |  |   |
|                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact  | <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral |
| Details:                    | N/A   |  |   |

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#### Version History

| Version | Date      | Action                                    | By    |
|---------|-----------|---|-------|
| 1.0     | May 2022  | Harmonisation of BCOM/ESO policy. Rebrand | HJ/JD |
| 1.1     | July 2023 | Annual review                             | HJ/JD |