

# **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION POLICY**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Colchester Institute believes firmly that diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential factors which contribute to the academic and economic strengths of the College and the wellbeing of all students and staff. This policy deals with the promotion of equality of opportunity for all at Colchester Institute (including those within University Centre Colchester) in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.2 Colchester Institute will treat all members and potential members of the College community with respect and dignity and seek to provide a safe and positive working and learning environment, free from discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.
- 1.3 The College is committed to providing a learning and working environment that values all forms of diversity and seeks to create a culture of conscious inclusion in which issues of racism, stereotyping and discrimination can be discussed openly with a shared commitment to challenging prejudice.

## **2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

- 2.1 This policy sets out the Colchester Institute response to the obligations of The Equality Act 2010 in having due regard to the statutory and the public sector duties, the elimination of unlawful discrimination, the advancement of equality of opportunity and the requirement to foster good relations.
- 2.2 It operates within the context of regulatory requirements of a variety of stakeholder organisations including the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the Office for Students, OFSTED and a range of Awarding Organisations, and kite marks such as Matrix.
- 2.3 All aspects of College provision, to both internal and external customers, are covered by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy.
- 2.4 This Policy will apply to all Governors, full time, part time and temporary staff and students, visitors, and contractors, additionally it will set the standards we require of subcontracted learning providers. In ensuring that this policy is fully effective the college undertakes to work in partnership with recognised trade unions; work-based learning employers; with employees and with students in its development and implementation.

## **3. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 3.1 Colchester Institute is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst staff and students. All employees whether part time, full time or temporary will be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. All employees will be encouraged and supported to develop their full potential.
- 3.2 The College will encourage each person to own the responsibility of promotion and implementation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion throughout the College.
- 3.3 As part of its responsibility as an employer the College will ensure that all staff receive appropriate training on their rights and responsibilities in relation to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Legislation and the College's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies and procedures.
- 3.4 Our vision is for Colchester Institute is, by 2024, to be celebrated as an outstanding provider of education and training in the Eastern region, recognised for its significant contribution to the social and economic recovery of individuals and organisations following the events of 2020.

- 3.5 We want to create a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone can reach their full potential and have a real choice to participate in and contribute to our activities and processes, without prejudice and discrimination.
- 3.6 The College works actively to make progress in the following areas:
- 3.6.1 Direct Discrimination - Ensuring that no person is treated less favourably than others on the grounds of Race, Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Marriage & Civil Partnership, Pregnancy & Maternity/Paternity.
  - 3.6.2 Indirect Discrimination - Ensuring that no criterion, provision, or procedure which applies equally to everyone has a disproportionate adverse effect on people from any disadvantaged group covered by the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

#### **4. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

- 4.1 Discrimination is defined as an act which has the effect of treating a person less favourably because of factors related to their personal characteristics such as disability or sexual orientation, and unrelated to their merit.
- 4.2 Diversity encompasses all forms of difference in individuals even if they are not covered by legislative acts, such as height and weight.
- 4.3 Equity is defined in this context as the “absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people”<sup>1</sup>
- 4.3 Harassment is unwanted conduct which may create the effect (intentionally or unintentionally) of affecting an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment which interferes with an individual’s learning or working environment. Harassment may be persistent or an isolated incident and may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people.
- 4.4 Stereotyping is defined as a standardised mental picture that one person or group of people holds in common about another person or group of people and can be either positive or negative.
- 4.5 Positive Action is the deliberate introduction of measures to eliminate or reduce discrimination, or its effects. It is not about special treatment for any one particular group, but the fair treatment of all people. It is distinct from positive discrimination which is unlawful.

#### **5. OUR COMMITMENT TOWARDS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS IN TERMS OF PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

##### **5.1 Race**

Colchester Institute does not accept any form of racial discrimination or harassment against any student, member of staff, visitor, prospective student, or prospective member of staff based on their actual or perceived race, colour, culture, caste, ethnic, or national origin. All members of the College community have a duty to make sure that their working and learning environment is free from prejudice. As a part of our Public Sector Equality Duty, Colchester Institute monitors staff and student profiles regarding ethnicity and address any imbalances through the implementation of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Action Plan and, if deemed necessary, the use of positive action.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. WHO | Equity. Retrieved from who.int: <https://www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/equity/en/>

## 5.2 Disability

5.2.1 Colchester Institute will not discriminate against or tolerate the harassment of members of staff, students, job applicants, prospective students, or visitors because of a disability or perceived disability. Colchester Institute recognises disability to include someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities, including people with; physical and sensory impairment, learning difficulties, mental health problems, hidden impairments and people living with HIV/AIDS.

5.2.2 The College welcomes applications from people with disabilities, values the contribution of existing staff and students with disabilities, and will treat staff and students fairly should they become disabled. Colchester Institute incorporates the Disability Equality Duty within the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, providing a framework for proactively monitoring and raising awareness of disability in work and study.

5.2.3 The College has made the commitment to the following:

- To interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities.
- To ask disabled employees at least once a year through the Check In process what we can do to make sure they can develop and use their abilities at work, and whether any further reasonable adjustments are required.
- To make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment.
- To take action to ensure that key employees (e.g., managers, business support teams, reception staff, etc.) develop the awareness needed of disability to make our commitments work.
- Each year, to review the commitments and what has been achieved, plan ways to improve on them and let all employees know about progress and future plans.

## 5.3 Gender and Gender Reassignment

5.3.1 Colchester Institute will not treat any staff member, job applicant, student, or prospective student less favourably because of their gender, whether they are male, female, trans or/and undergoing any stage of gender reassignment. Discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender, including sexual harassment, is not acceptable and will be dealt with in line with the College's disciplinary procedures.

5.3.2 Colchester Institute monitor staff and student profiles regarding gender and address any imbalances through the implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and, where deemed necessary, the use of positive action.

## 5.4 Sexual Orientation

Colchester Institute does not accept any form of discrimination or harassment against any student, member of staff, job applicant or prospective student because of their sexual orientation or their perceived sexual orientation. The College is committed to working towards an environment where all people feel able to be open about their sexuality and aims to promote awareness and tackle negative stereotypes.

#### 5.4 Religion or Belief

Colchester Institute does not accept any form of discrimination or harassment against any staff member, job applicant, student, or prospective student because of cultural, philosophical or religious beliefs or perceived beliefs. Colchester Institute is a secular College. The College respects the diverse cultural and religious traditions of all its students and staff and accepts the rights of individuals and groups peaceably to worship and to fulfil their cultural obligations. Accordingly, the College will neither promote, nor permit to be promoted, any one religious faith or culture. Whilst College facilities exist primarily for the delivery of educational activities, arrangements will be made, where practicable, for students and staff to carry out essential religious observance. Dedicated facilities cannot be provided for particular faith groups but are provided for all. Where cultural or religious needs conflict with existing working or learning requirements, the College will make adjustments, where practicable, to meet those needs. This may include adaptations for prayer times, dress codes, dietary requirements, or religious holidays.

#### 5.6 Age

Colchester Institute recognises that education is a life-long pursuit and subject to formal funding arrangements, works to support learners of all ages to achieve the qualifications they desire. The College endeavours to provide appropriate support for all learners within these boundaries. Colchester Institute will not use age-related criteria for staff recruitment purposes unless it is to take positive action. All staff members have equal rights to training, promotion, and other aspects of career development.

#### 5.7 Pregnancy and Maternity

Colchester Institute works to support all learners to achieve the qualifications they desire including those who are pregnant, become pregnant or have recently been pregnant. Where the needs of the student conflicts with existing working or learning requirements, the College will make adjustments, where practicable, to meet those needs. This may include adaptations for dress code or flexible timetabling.

Colchester Institute will not discriminate against any member of staff or job applicant because of pregnancy or maternity. All staff members have equal rights to training, promotion, and other aspects of career development. Further information for staff can be found in our Maternity Policy located on the HR page of the College portal.

#### 5.8 Marriage and Civil Partnership

Colchester Institute does not accept any form of discrimination or harassment against any staff member, job applicant, student, or prospective student because they are single, married, or in a civil partnership.

### **6. OUR STANDARDS**

#### 6.1 Students

Colchester Institute admits students solely based on their merits, abilities, and potential, and will not refuse admission to any applicant applying to an appropriate course based on any other factor. A rigorous monitoring system is in place whereby the College monitors student admissions, achievement, retention, and complaints through Curriculum Monitoring meetings.

The College is committed to widening participation and our College marketing campaigns will aim to positively reflect and recruit the communities we serve. Where particular courses traditionally attract specific groups, the College will actively encourage participation by members of under-represented groups and will develop student assistance programmes that facilitate the admission of students irrespective of their background.

All students at Colchester Institute have the right to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect. They also have a responsibility to abide by this Policy in their dealings with others and are expected to follow all Colchester Institute policies regarding behaviour. Colchester Institute will use the College Expectations initiative and induction process to inform students of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the promotion of this Policy, and our staff will challenge student behaviour which does not meet these standards.

Any allegations of discrimination will be taken seriously and will be investigated in line with the College disciplinary procedures. Depending on the outcome, training and/or guidance may be offered to both staff and students to ensure future compliance.

## 6.2 Curriculum

Colchester Institute aims to provide an inclusive teaching and learning environment through individualised support plans, and professional, interactive delivery. Our courses are designed with diversity, equity, and inclusion in mind, and we strive to have high quality resources free from bias or stereotyping, which promote positive images. The College promotes British Values as defined in the Government's 2011 PREVENT Strategy: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

We endeavour to value and nurture an increasing diversity among students and be able to meet the needs of a wide variety of social and cultural requirements, including students with caring responsibilities, religious requirements, physical or mental impairments and students for whom English is an additional language. Our tutorial programme for learners encourages exploration and discourse around a wide range of topics designed to widen perspectives and support a variety of wellbeing issues.

## 6.3 Staff

- 6.3.1 All employees, whether part-time, full-time, or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be based on aptitude and ability. All recruitment advertisements, job descriptions and person specifications will emphasise the College's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and they will be drawn up in such a way as to prevent discrimination against suitably qualified or experienced applicants. We will ensure that all staff members who are involved in shortlisting, interviewing, or other selection processes are trained in line with current equality legislation and use of the College policies.

- 6.3.2 Colchester Institute supports and abides by all Equal Pay legislation and endeavours to provide a transparent reward system based on objective criteria and free from any bias.
- 6.3.2 All newly appointed staff will participate in an induction programme that reflects and reinforces our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a part of the induction programme all new members of staff are required to participate in equality and diversity training.
- 6.3.4 Subject to available resources and relevance to our College priorities, all staff, including part-time and hourly paid staff, will have an entitlement to undertake staff development to enhance their skills, effectiveness, and opportunities.
- 6.3.5 Colchester Institute recognises and values staff members' different needs including childcare, eldercare, and personal development. Staff working patterns will, where reasonably feasible, be arranged in such a way as to facilitate work/life balance. Further information regarding flexible working can be found in our Flexible Working Policy.
- 6.3.6 In accordance with our Dignity at Work Policy, every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. All Colchester Institute staff have a responsibility to abide by this Policy and no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated. Breaches of this Policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

## **7. UNCONSCIOUS BIAS**

Unconscious bias refers to a bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment, and personal experiences. We aim to be aware of our own conscious and unconscious biases, prejudices, and stereotypes, and to mitigate the effect of unconscious or implicit bias on our decision making. All staff have a duty to contribute constructively to matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## **8. CONFIDENTIALITY AND MONITORING**

- 8.1 Colchester Institute will ensure that any diversity monitoring data on staff or students is used exclusively for monitoring purposes and that it is treated with confidentiality and sensitivity. The information we gather through monitoring will be used to inform planning, target setting and future action. Where monitoring reveals any gaps in our overall Strategy or our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy, we will take prompt action including updating the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.
- 8.2 Colchester Institute will protect the confidentiality of any diversity monitoring data in relation to staff or students and will safeguard any information disclosed voluntarily within the regulations set by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

## **9. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

- 9.1 Each member of the Senior Leadership Team, supported by Human Resources, has the responsibility to ensure that the Equality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and the overall promotion of inclusion are put into practice in the areas for which he or she has responsibility.
- 9.2 The policy owner, as a member of SLT, will ensure that this policy is reviewed at least every three years.

## **10. BREACH OF THE POLICY**

- 10.1 Colchester Institute will take seriously any instances of breach to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy by students, staff, or visitors. Any breach will be investigated and where appropriate will be considered under the relevant disciplinary procedure for staff or students. Regarding any breach of the policy by visitors, Colchester Institute will take appropriate action in relation to the nature of the incident.

## **11.COMPLAINTS**

### **11.1 Complaints Made by Students**

Colchester Institute is committed to providing all students with a high-quality service. We want to know if our service has not met with students' expectations so that we can do something about it. Whenever possible students should firstly talk with a tutor and tell them what has gone wrong. If the response is unsatisfactory, a formal complaint can be raised through the College Complaints Procedure. A formal complaint can be made emailing [quality@colchester.ac.uk](mailto:quality@colchester.ac.uk). We will explain what course of action will be taken and in what time frame.

### **11.2 Complaints Made by Staff**

Complaints made by staff can be made via the Dignity at work Policy, Workplace Resolution Policy or the Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure (details of these policies are available on the HR Portal). Support for staff is available through the Human Resources Team, Employee Assistance Plan, line management and the trade unions.

## **12.OTHER POLICIES**

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy is underpinned by the following College policies:  
and practices:

*Additional Learning Support Policy*

*Dignity at Work Policy*

*Staff Code of Conduct*

*Disability lift key requests*

*Disability statement*

*Flexible Working Policy & Procedure*

*Workplace Resolution Policy*

*Health and Safety policy*

*Staff Development and Performance Management Policy*

*Staff Induction Policy*

*Special Leave Policy*

*Maternity Policy*

*Paternity Leave Policy*

*Parental Leave Policy*

*Shared Parental Leave Policy*

*Adoption Leave Policy*

**PREVENT**

*Recruitment and Selection Policy*

*Safeguarding (young people and vulnerable adults)*

*Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure*

*Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure*

*Wellbeing Policy for Staff*