WEST THAMES COLLEGE

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

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EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY

1. Introduction

The public expects West Thames College to deliver high quality education and support services coupled with the best value for money. Understanding the different needs of the communities we serve can enable us to target resources more effectively and deliver better services.

The public also expects the College to employ the best people, on merit, so finding ways to reach out to the best potential recruits, removing barriers to successful careers, and creating workplaces free from harassment and bullying are fundamental to the delivery of our vision which is set out below:

West Thames will be a vibrant college, inspiring all our learners to fulfil their dreams and ambitions. Our outstanding education and training will contribute to a prosperous and cohesive community.

Equality and diversity are at the heart of our vision and are reflected in our four values

Integrity Excellence Equality Respect

We are proud of the diversity of our students and staff and will use their different backgrounds, experiences and talents to be more creative, more successful and more inclusive.

We are privileged to be a part of the culturally rich communities of Hounslow and West London and recognise the contributions the different communities have made to the life and prosperity of the area.

We are committed to increasing the diversity of our workforce and to meeting the different needs of our students. We aim to provide an environment in which everyone, regardless of their background and identity, can study and work to the best of their ability.

1.1 Equality and Diversity Statement

West Thames College is committed to providing high quality education and training that reflects the best practice in equality and diversity.

Our goal is for all of our students to be successful and we will provide them with the support necessary to achieve this goal. We will work to ensure our students value the diversity of others and we will actively promote good relations between students.

We aim to recruit staff from diverse backgrounds, provide them with rewarding work, support their professional development and value their contributions to the College.

The College encourages the active participation of all sections of the community and will work to provide learning opportunities that accommodate diversity and raise the aspirations and achievements of students and staff.

The Corporation oversees the work of the College and determines its educational character and sets its long term strategy. To do this successfully its members need to reflect the diverse nature of the communities that we serve.

2. Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out how West Thames College will meet its obligations under the above statement, under the Equality Act 2010 and as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Equality Act establishes the following nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage & civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race, including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to West Thames College, to public authorities and others carrying out public functions. The requirements of the Act and the Duty are fully in keeping with the values of the College and are fundamental to fulfilling our vision, to meeting the needs of our students and to our work force.

2.1 Scope of this Policy

This policy reflects the current relevant legislation and related guidance and applies to the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

However, this policy goes beyond the legislation by requiring the College to have due regard to the need to tackle discrimination and promote equal opportunities for those who are seeking asylum, are in care or leaving care, are ex-offenders or are homeless.

This policy applies to all aspects of College activity whether that be student or staff focused. It applies to our relationships with other stakeholders as well as strategic planning, self assessment, procurement and third party contracting arrangements.

3. General Duty Requirements of the Equality Act 2010

The general duty requires the College to have due regard to the need to

- eliminate unlawful discrimination whether direct, indirect, through association or perception
- eliminate harassment/victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different groups

This means that when we are designing and delivering our services, we will consider how we can make them appropriate, accessible and fair for everyone. We will also ensure that decision making is based on real life experience and evidence of need, rather than arbitrary assumptions and stereotypes.

4. Specific Duty Requirements of the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 requires the College to publish equality objectives at least every four years and these need to be specific and measurable. The objectives should reflect the major issues facing the protected groups who are served by College.

The College's equality objectives are set in our strategic plan. This links to annual development plans through which performance against these objectives is reviewed and reported termly, and outcomes are published at the end of the academic year.

The objectives will be the result of a sound analysis of trends in such things as student recruitment, student success rates, employment and promotion patterns and feedback from students and members of staff.

As part of this analysis there will be engagement with students, members of staff and other key stakeholders and information on this process will be published alongside the objectives.

The College's current equality objectives are:

- To monitor the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff employed by the College and maintain a BAME staffing level that is broadly in line with the diversity of our student body.
- To attain Level 3 'Disability Confident Leader' status before next renewal (September 2026) through improved recruitment, retention and development of disabled staff.
- To continue to monitor and reduce the median gender pay gap to <6%.
- To translate policy into practice by monitoring performance and acting against discrimination in all forms.
- To actively engage students via student voice and student parliament so that they may help inform college decision-making that is equitable and inclusive for the benefit of our diverse student population.

5. Implementing this Policy

This policy will be implemented through established College structures and procedures and through the annual college development plan that sets out priorities and targets for the year.

The Corporation designates the CEO & Principal as having overall responsibility for ensuring the implementation of this policy.

The CEO & Principal may designate a named senior post-holder to lead on equality issues, including the promotion of good relations between people of different religions and racial groups, the elimination of prejudice and unfair and unlawful discrimination.

All managers are responsible for implementing this policy in their area of service delivery and all members of staff are responsible for implementing this policy in the delivery of their day-to-day work. Management action, including formal staff disciplinary procedures, will be used where there are serious or repeated breaches of this policy and/or where this constitutes direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Students are responsible for supporting this policy in their relationships with fellow students, with members of staff and with visitors. The College will take action, including disciplinary action, where there are serious breaches of the policy, including harassment or victimisation.

The processes of staff and student induction, the content of professional development and learning and student enrichment programmes together with staff and student recruitment campaigns will support the practical application of this policy.

There will be a formal equality committee chaired by a senior post-holder and the Executive Team will approve the committee's role and membership which will be drawn from across the College.

The equality committee will advise the Executive Team and college committees on priorities and targets and on the need for college committees on monitoring procedures.

The Corporation will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy through its Quality and Equality Sub Committee.

Students and members of the public should use the College's Complaints Procedure if they believe they have been treated in a way that contravenes this policy. Advice and guidance for students is available through personal tutors, Student Experience staff and external agencies.

Members of staff should use the College's Grievance Procedure if they believe they have been treated in a way that contravenes this policy. Advice and guidance for staff is available through the line management process, the HR Department, recognised trades union officers and external agencies.

6. Key Equality Principles

The College believes an inclusive environment embracing diversity in all its aspects is essential to the achievement of its Vision and so the College will work to create a community which is tolerant and respectful of others and where acts of disrespect and displays of intolerance are not accepted. To this end the College will seek to provide an environment free from harassment, prejudice, unfair and unlawful discrimination and victimisation.

The College will aim to recruit students and employ a workforce that reflects the community in which it is based and which it serves.

The College will ensure that no job applicant or employee is disadvantaged, or treated less favourably, because of conditions or requirements not related to the job or because of a protected characteristic.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to policies, arrangements, facilities and premises to ensure equal access for disabled students and staff and prospective students and staff.

Where permitted, the College will take positive or affirmative action in furtherance of this policy, for example to address issues of under-representation.

The College is an accredited Level 2 Disability Confident Employer and is working towards the achievement of Level 3 Disability Confident Leader status.

The College has signed the Age-friendly Employer Pledge, a nationwide programme run by the Centre for Ageing Better. By signing the pledge, we are showing our commitment to older workers and making our workplace age-friendly.

The College has achieved the Good Business Charter (GBC) Accreditation, which highlights our ongoing focus on building strong foundations for staff, students, partners and the wider community, while acting as a positive role model for ethical business conduct within education and beyond.

The College will put in place a range of initiatives to give voice to the concerns and aspirations of its students with a view to increasing their success rates and improving their experiences.

7. Communicating this Policy and Related Outcomes

This policy, and any associated information, will be communicated through induction processes for new students and staff, through line management, management training programmes, other professional development activities and through student tutorial and activity programmes.

Curriculum and publicity materials, student activities, displays and exhibitions will reflect the College's commitment to equality and diversity.

Outcomes of monitoring exercises relating to this policy will be disseminated to students, staff, Corporation members and relevant external organisations.

Monitoring

Progress in implementing this policy will be monitored by assessing what has been achieved against key indicators such as the student and staff profiles, student success rates, patterns of staff recruitment and promotion and detailed information will be provided through annual Human Resources and Equality and Diversity reports.