

Policy: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Date: September 2024

Approved by: Director of Student Employment and Experience (DSL)

Introduction

Gloucestershire College is passionate about equality, diversity and inclusion in all of our activities. Our ambitious and achievable objectives have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and build on work already completed. The College also works to meet the UK HE Quality Code Values.

The College affirms that eliminating attainment differences, celebrating and promoting diversity is a key element of the College's mission. The College also recognises that achieving these ambitions brings a range of benefits to the organisation, including:

- Creating a positive atmosphere where there is a shared commitment to value diversity with respect and inclusion;
- Delivering excellent experience by ensuring there is an inclusive ethos, understanding and responding to the needs of individuals;
- Achieving a representative workforce and student body;
- Promoting social cohesion through a greater knowledge and understanding of the diverse community we serve.

Equality is about being valued for who we are and having equal opportunities, regardless of diversities. This helps us to achieve our best without unfair obstacles, stigma or stereotyping.

In practice, equality means all of us:

- Being able to access College, work and learning with equal ease and dignity;
- Having a sense of being well respected and safe at College;
- Feeling the College, the programmes and the policies have been designed with us all in mind;
- Feeling the College embraces all and celebrates different cultures and views.

We value diversity because our staff and students:

- Have the right to be respected in their place of work or study
- Build a stronger sense of identity and wellbeing
- Gain a more comprehensive understanding of their community and build wider networks
- Improve career aspirations and outcomes
- Experience a more creative place to learn and work

We celebrate the fact that our students and staff, our partners and friends, are from different social and ethnic backgrounds, different faiths, sexual orientation and ages.

1. Students and Studying

Equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded throughout student life at College where:

- Students have personalised study programmes and support;
- Diverse teams are encouraged and celebrated;
- Teamwork, communication and respect are promoted and valued as part of student development;
- Integrity and respect are promoted, practiced and expected

The study programme, support and extra-curricular activities give students:

- An unbiased and inclusive insight into the subjects and activities;
- A broad view of how their course fits within the world;
- Skills to help them adapt and learn throughout their lives within a changing world;
- An equal opportunity to achieve success;
- Opportunities to discuss equality, diversity and inclusion amongst peers and staff to promote and develop a greater understanding;
- Awareness and understanding of issues and topics relating to safeguarding, protected characteristics, health and wellbeing;
- Opportunities to discuss the College Values and the Fundamental British Values in an open and safe environment and understand the importance of behaving respectfully.

We are committed to creating a safe, enjoyable and challenging learning experience that ensures respect and inclusion is afforded to all. To achieve this:

- Safeguarding is a number 1 priority;
- Harassment and bullying is not tolerated at College, including the use of social media and digital technology.
- Raise awareness and educate people around sexual harassment/abuse and how to report any concerns
- Creating equal opportunities to access learning and celebrate diversity on our courses, regardless of age, gender, race, disability and background;
- All students are encouraged and supported to be ambitious and have high aspirations;
- Raise awareness, promote respect and tolerance and provide support relating to protected characteristics
- Personalised support and accessibility to students with SEND or additional needs to delivers inclusivity and promotes independence;
- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds can access a range of financial support to enable access to their education;
- Feedback to students is respectful and fosters a culture of improvement.

What does excellence look like?

- **All students are respected and valued by their teachers and peers;**
- **Inclusivity and access to equal opportunities exists for all students;**
- **Students discuss and learn about equality and the environment relating to their course and long-term ambitions;**
- **Students work effectively in diverse teams.**

2. Staff and Working

Because we value equality, diversity and inclusion, the College:

- Embeds the College values in everything we do;
- Values everyone's work and takes concerns seriously;
- Widens participation by protected groups when accessing opportunities for development and progression.
- Promotes a healthy and considerate balance between work and the rest of our lives.
- Is a disability confident employer;
- Works to remove stigmas and create a culture of openness.
- Equality and diversity training is mandatory for all staff

We know that any form of discrimination can intrude into the workplace in both blatant and subtle ways.

To counter this possibility, we promote a culture where, for example:

- Banter or flippancy about lesbians, gay men, and transgender people is not acceptable;
- Minority ethnic staff are not expected to be cultural experts;
- Sexualised talk about women and men does not happen.

3. Leadership and Management

Inequality is about the social and economic state of not being equal, especially in rights, opportunities and status. Promoting equality is about helping close this gap and have a more equitable access to opportunities for all.

- **Leadership from the Top**

Our **Board of Governors** has ultimate accountability for compliance with the Equality Act and for ensuring that we are able to demonstrate compliance by:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low

Senior leaders promote equality and diversity and inclusion through role modelling the values in specific projects and their day to day work.

This means managers who, for example:

- Role model both the College and British values;
- Meet staff on a regular basis to inform and update;
- Do what they say they'll do – and tackle problems, mindful of how this affects others;

- Are clear in direction and expected outcomes;
- Use a collaborative and consultative style of managing – to encourage more creative results;
- Foster a culture where everyone can talk about equality with fluency and ease;
- Consult with others so decision making is not too narrowly focussed.

Bullying, discrimination and harassment are treated seriously at the College. All allegations of bullying, discrimination and harassment are recorded and reported on in our Safeguarding and EDI reports.

4. Local Community and Procurement

The College works in partnership with a large number of employers on, for example, apprenticeship schemes and work experience.

We are one of the largest employers in the area and play a significant role in the local economy. So we are well placed to promote our values beyond the boundaries of the College and into the community.

The Equality Act 2010 requires us to promote equality through the services we procure. This means we value partnerships with businesses and contractors who can demonstrate for example:

- A commitment to fair and equitable employment practices;
- A guarantee on the well-being of our students, and protection from harassment and discrimination;
- Involvement with the local community and a commitment to training young people.

We procure, commission and contract with services who are local companies owned or part-owned by women, minority ethnic, LGBTQ and disabled people – because these are the groups who often find it harder to compete in the world of business.

5. College Environment (campuses and facilities)

The College is committed to ensuring our campuses and facilities can be accessed and enjoyed by our staff and students.

The College is proud to have an inclusive environment that includes:

- Welcoming and accessible reception areas for all
- Classrooms with appropriate access for all and sensory-friendly stimuli
- Sensory-friendly corridors and stairwells to support those with visual impairments
- Elevator facilities with priority access for those with physical impairments or difficulties
- Well-equipped toilet facilities at each campus, including disabled toilets
- Changing Places shower/toilet facility, with overhead hoist and changing bed
- Autism friendly learning, social and calm spaces
- Flexible multi-faith spaces for prayer, reflection and contemplation
- An LGBTQAI+ network of staff and students

Engagement with staff and students about the College environment is essential to maintaining its inclusivity. This is achieved by:

- Personalised transition, initial assessments and diagnostics to support personalisation;
- Ongoing two-way discussions and feedback about the spaces and facilities;
- Assessments of student needs to include additional support, reasonable adjustments and exam access arrangements;
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans are completed in collaboration with the individual
- Consultation with staff and students in our plans for refurbishment and design of new spaces or building.
- Acknowledging that while not every space can always be easily accessible for every individual, the upmost effort is made to identify reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility.

6. Our Equality Policies

Our duty is protection from discrimination or harassment on the basis of 9 characteristics: age, race, gender, gender identity, religion / belief, sexuality and disability, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy, maternity and paternity.

Disability covers physical and sensory impairment, learning disability and difficulty, mental health and neuro-diverse conditions (such as autism, dyspraxia etc).

It also covers class, poverty and deprivation, health and well-being, safety in public spaces, as well as other life factors which carry stigma and stereotype such as unemployment, residency status and asylum, ability in language and literacy etc.

We also work to reduce inequality between those who have more and those that have least.

Removing existing and potential barriers to inclusion is critical to creating an inclusive work and study environment where people feel welcomed, valued, and supported. **Equality Impact Assessments** are completed during the development of this policy and other relevant policies to provide a structure to fully embed inclusion into any decisions, policies or activities that may impact on people and ensure policies are compliant with their stated intentions. Existing policies will also be reviewed using the EIA framework.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Learner Code of Conduct
- Learner Disciplinary Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Transgender Policy
- Staff Recruitment Policy

7. Our College Values

Be Respectful

- To be respectful of self, others, property and environment when at college or representing the college.
- To care for one another, our surroundings and the community.

- To be inclusive of others and everyone; listening, respecting and showing consideration for people's qualities, differences, beliefs and views.
- To create a sense of trust, safety and well-being
- To be non-judgemental and polite. Be friendly, welcoming, supportive and inclusive.
- To demonstrate respect through all forms of communication.

Be Responsible

- To take ownership of my behaviour, attitude and learning/development.
- To be responsible and accountable for my own actions and the impact that I have on the college, and wider, community.
- To be mindful of the wellbeing of others.
- To be mindful of the way I communicate with others, making sure that my communications reflect the college values.

Be Ambitious

- To be ambitious and aspirational for our learners and one another and celebrate successes
- To demonstrate and commit to continuously improve, learn and succeed for yourself, for others and the college
- To show positive aspirations and determination in your plans and actions
- To be supportive of everyone and encourage their positive ambitions.
- To provide opportunities for everyone to improve and succeed

Be Collaborative

- To work as part of a team or teams, to support each other to contribute to the success of self, others and the GC Community
- To contribute, listen, communicate and work with each other to develop and grow together.
- Working together with purpose, to have a positive impact on the college and be responsive to change.
- To be inclusive, encouraging and supportive when working as a team and across teams
- To use effective communication when working together
- To be a team player, by being reflective, creative and sharing ideas that support improvements

8. The Legal Context

Because the College receives public funds, we are bound by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

This requires us to publish our Equality Objectives.

Gloucestershire College is committed to demonstrating our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in all of our activities. Our ambitious and achievable objectives have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and build on work already completed.

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- Creating a positive atmosphere where there is a shared commitment to value diversity and respect difference;
- Delivering excellent customer service by ensuring there is an inclusive ethos, responding to the needs of individuals;
- Achieving a representative workforce and student body;
- Promoting social cohesion through a greater knowledge and understanding of the diverse community we serve.

9. EDI Impact Measures

The College has an EDI Action Plan 21-25.

Objective 1 – Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.

Measure(s):

- Year on year improvement in student awareness of EDI issues as evidenced through learner engagement and feedback.
- FBVs are embedded in to curriculum and wider programme of study. Learners are familiar with the FBVs and can demonstrate understanding.
- EIAs are carried out for policy development.
- Reduction in the gender pay gap (12.3% at 2021)

Objective 2 – Advance equality opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Measure(s):

- Improvement in headline achievement data for disadvantaged learners.
- Narrow the achievement gap for black female 16-18 learners.
- Increase in staff disclosures of equality information.

- Increase workforce representation of BAME employees in management roles.
- Increase recruitment of female learners in Computing and STEM subjects.
- Increase EDI composition of Board based on AOC recommendations.

Objective 3 – Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Measure(s):

- Increased opportunities for learners to participate in EDI activity.
- Develop EDI networks for staff and learners
- Year on year increase in participation in events celebrating diversity and inclusion.

The College will review progress against the 21-25 action plan annually and include in EDI Annual Report. During the 2024-2025 academic year, a new action plan will be developed based on analysis of the EDI data available.