Equality and Diversity Policy

**Purpose**

The International Assessment Centre (IAC) will ensure all decisions on the employment and development of employees / associates (and prospective employees / associates) are objective, based on merit and support business goals. This can be achieved through the continuous review of workplace policies, practices, procedures and behaviours to check that these are enabling employees / associates to give their best.

**Principle**

The IAC is committed to maintaining good practice in relation to equal opportunities and will review its policies in this area on a regular basis in line with legislative changes and best practice benchmarking.

It is therefore, the IAC’s policy that no individual receives less favourable treatment than another, directly or indirectly, on the grounds of age, sex, marital status, race, religion, colour ethnic or national origin, nationality, citizenship, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment membership of, or refusal to become a member a trade union.

* Employees / Associates are required to demonstrate their commitment to the policy by reading, understanding and abiding by the policy.
* Equal opportunity in the working environment will impact on a number of areas and individuals, therefore the IAC will aim to ensure that: -
* Recruitment practices and selection procedures are free from discrimination or bias
* Working practices, career progression and promotion opportunities are free from discrimination or bias
* Employees / Associates are aware of their own personal responsibility in ensuring the support of the policy in practice
* The IAC is committed to complying with all relevant legislation concerning Equal Opportunity including the: -
* Race Relations Act (1976)
* Sex Discrimination Act (1975)
* Equal Pay Act (1970)
* Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
* Part Time Workers Regulations (2000)
* Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (2003)
* And any code of practice issued pursuant to those statutes

**Definitions**

**Direct discrimination:** Occurs where an individual (including a job applicant) is treated less favourably than another in same circumstances on one of the grounds

**Indirect discrimination:** Occurs where a condition is applied equally to all applicants, employees / Associates but the proportion of the one group of individuals that can comply is considerably smaller than the proportion of the other group that can comply. This policy applies equally whether full-time, part-time or fixed term Employee / Associate.

**Race Discrimination:** Includes any less favourable treatment of an individual on the ground of their race, colour, nationality citizenship and national or ethnic origins.

**Sex Discrimination:** includes any less favourable treatment of an individual on the grounds of their gender, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy and/or his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

**Disability Discrimination*:*** *a* ‘disabled person’ as defined under the Disability Discrimination Act (1996) is one who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

The IAC’s policy is that no employee or job applicant should receive less favourable treatment than another directly or indirectly on the grounds of disability. This applies to: -

* discrimination against a disabled person in employment
* failure to provide any necessary reasonable adjustments
* the provision of lower standards, less favourable terms, or the refusal of service to disabled persons.

If an individual is disabled, efforts will be made to provide reasonable adjustments to reduce the effects of the disability. They will not receive less favourable treatment than a non-disabled person directly or indirectly on the grounds of their disability unless such treatment is justified. In addition, if they are applying for a job, they will be asked prior to interview, if they have specific requirements, so that reasonable adjustments can be made in advance. It should be noted that there are certain circumstances in which the organisation is justified in treating a disabled person less favourable than others. These specified conditions are that: -

* the individual is unsuitable for the employment
* the individual is less suitable for the employment than another person
* the nature of the individual’s disability significantly impedes, or would significantly impede the performance of their duties
* in the case of training, the nature of the individual’s disability would significantly reduce the value of the training (either to the individual or to the employer)

If necessary, the company will seek expert help in assessing disability and exploring possibilities for appropriate and practical adjustments.

**Complaints and Investigations**

The following procedures detail both informal and formal methods that may be used to ensure that any discriminatory problems that the employee / associate may encounter are resolved in an efficient and effective manner.

**Informal process**

If possible, and where appropriate, the employee / associate should attempt to resolve the problem informally in the first instance. The first step is for the employee / associate to explain clearly to the person engaging in the unwanted behaviour why they feel it is discriminatory.

**Formal process**

If the discrimination continues, or if it is inappropriate to resolve the problem informally, the following steps should be taken: -

* The employee / associate should raise the issue with their direct line manager (or IAC Director), who will provide support and assistance. At this stage any issues raised will remain in confidence.
* If the employee / associate wishes to raise a formal complaint, they should put it in writing to their manager (Or IAC Director).
* The manager (or IAC Director) will arrange for the issues raised to be investigated. The investigation will explore the issues raised by the employee / associate, the person complained about and any witnesses who may wish to make a statement. In certain cases, it may be appropriate to suspend the person complained about to facilitate the investigation.
* The appointed investigating person will aim to minimise the length of any investigation, whilst at the same time, balancing the need to carry out a thorough investigation. All investigations will be handled in a strictly confidential manner
* Each side will have an opportunity to put their side of the case, either on their own or with a work colleague and the person complained about will be given full details of the nature of the complaint and will be given the opportunity to respond
* Following the investigation, the findings and any recommendations will be given to the employee / associate and the person complained about, in writing. If the issues raised have not been resolved to an acceptable level the employee may appeal to the Managing Director.
* If the case is substantiated a **disciplinary hearing** may be convened and the company’s disciplinary policy will apply.
* The company will undertake to do everything possible to prevent any re-occurrence of any substantiated discriminatory behaviour or practices.

\*\* Where a complaint is upheld, it may be necessary to relocate or transfer one party. It will not automatically be the complainant who is expected to move, but the choice will be offered where practicable. Transfer on disadvantageous terms may be offered to the person complained about where allegations are proven, as an alternative to dismissal.

**During Employment**

The IAC will make every effort to ensure that discrimination does not occur during employment. The following action will be taken specifically surrounding the following areas: -

**Advertising Vacancies**

Where vacancies are advertised, either internally or externally, care will be taken to ensure the advertisements do not discriminate against anyone on the grounds contained in the equal opportunity list.

**Role Profiles**

The wording of the role profile will clearly identify the responsibilities of a role in order to eliminate any potentially discriminatory criteria or phrases.

The recruiting person should give consideration to hours of work and job content to determine whether the role could be adequately carried out by job-sharing, flexitime or part-time hours, taking into account business and operational requirements.

**Assessment and Selection**

During an interview, questions will not be asked which are either directly or indirectly discriminatory and will only be questions which are directly relevant to the role in question.

As a rule, the recruiting person will avoid questions about personal circumstances unless this is justifiable because of a particular job need (e.g. shift working, call-out, long periods of travel away from home, or the needs of a disabled applicant)

The recruiting person will keep a copy of the assessment notes from the interview so the organisation can meet its legal obligations in terms of keeping the information for the required amount of time.

**Promotion, Transfer and Career Development**

The IAC will not treat any employee less favourably, for any reason in the Equal Opportunity list by denying them promotion or training by applying unnecessary criteria which disadvantages or prevents them from applying because they cannot meet the criteria.

If an employee / associate is on maternity leave she will be given the same rights to promotion and career development opportunities as her male counterpart. The IAC will ensure that the appropriate consideration is given to employees / associates who are taking / have taken parental leave, when deciding on promotion or career development opportunities. Similarly, if an employee / associate has a disability, he/she will not be placed at a disadvantage with regard to training and promotion opportunities.

An employee / associate will not be excluded from training and development opportunities simply because he/she works part-time.

Non-attendance relating to disability or pregnancy-related sickness will be disregarded with regard to promotions and development decisions.

**Redundancy**

The IAC will observe the Equal Opportunity and Diversity policy with regard to any redundancy selection criteria. Where attendance is listed as one of the selection criteria, non-attendance relating to disability or pregnancy related sickness will be disregarded.

**Part-Time**

If an employee / associate works part-time, he/she will be treated in the same way as their full-time colleagues with regard to promotion and training opportunities. He/she will be entitled to the same benefits as full time employees on a pro-rata basis. Overtime payments, where applicable, will be paid only after the normal full-time contractual hours have been worked. Associates will be paid as per the agreed and signed minor services agreement

**Equal Pay**

The IAC will ensure that a consistent approach is applied to remuneration for men and women and will make amendments where any inequalities are found. Where applicable, the IAC will participate in appropriate benchmarking to ensure that it applies the correct pay for the job regardless of any reason in the Equal Opportunity list. Associates will be paid as per the agreed and signed minor services agreement

**Age Discrimination**

The IAC will not apply age criteria to positions and will encourage fair consideration to all applicants, regardless of age, role profiles, and advertisements will not contain references to age.

**Discipline**

If an employee / associate harasses, bullies, victimises, or discriminates against another employee / associate, customer or supplier then he/she may be subject to investigation, which may result in disciplinary action. In serious cases of harassment, discrimination or abuse, such behaviour will be deemed to constitute gross misconduct and may result in immediate suspension and or summary dismissal.

**Protection Against Detriment**

An employee / associate will not suffer any detriment as a result of lodging, or assisting in the investigation of, a complaint under this policy.

Retaliation resulting from a complaint being made may be regarded as Gross Misconduct. However, disciplinary action may be taken against an unjustified malicious or vexatious claim and may result in summary dismissal

**Responsibilities**

* **Responsibilities of Management -** The IAC Management (including directors) is responsible for ensuring that employees / associates have understood the need to follow, and adhere to, the company’s policy on equal opportunities.
* **Responsibilities of Employees -** While the IAC is responsible for the adoption, implementation and monitoring of related policies, the employee / associate holds the responsibility of ensuring discrimination does not occur. It is the employee / associate’s obligation to comply with the Equal Opportunity and Diversity policy. They have a duty of care to treat each other with respect and dignity particularly in relation to sex, race, disability and age as defined above.

If employees / associates witness conduct which breaches the Equal Opportunities Policy it is their responsibility to report this to management or IAC directors.

P Wicks

IAC Director