



Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

The Academy is committed to a policy of equal opportunities in accordance with its Charter. It is the college's aim that potential and actual students are treated fairly on the basis of merit regardless of age, disability, family responsibilities, gender, HIV status, marital status, mental health problems, nationality, race, religious or political views or affiliations, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or transexualism.

1. Student Admissions

Recruitment literature will include a statement of the Academy's Equal Opportunities Policy for Students. All recruitment literature will use non-discriminatory language and will encourage applications from groups under-represented in higher education. Prospective students will be given realistic guidance on the costs they can expect to face and of financial support arrangements available to them.

The Academy's aim is to select those students most likely to benefit intellectually from its courses; aptitude for a particular course of study is the primary criterion for selection.

A student's academic qualifications provide evidence in the assessment of aptitude but other evidence relating to the student's academic record is also relevant. Reliance on academic qualifications for the assessment of aptitude to the exclusion of other factors may be discriminatory.

Previous and predicted pre-entry examination results will be regarded as only one type of evidence. In assessing a student's potential, weight will always be given to any identifiable factors which may have led the student to 'under perform', for example:

- attendance at poorly equipped or poorly staffed schools/colleges
- poor facilities, or none, for private study at home
- early family responsibilities
- a background in which the candidate's interest in higher education has not been encouraged
- a disability or prolonged illness which has affected educational development
- financial hardship

Explicit selection criteria will be established in order to eliminate subjectivity and to provide a framework for fair selection. Academic and other staff dealing with

admissions will be aware of and conform to the Academy's Equal Opportunities Policies relating to students.

The procedures followed during Confirmation and Clearing will be reviewed and if necessary revised, to minimise the risk of inadvertent discrimination, particularly in respect of filling vacancies. Students admitted through Clearing will be monitored separately to see if the arrangements might give rise to inequality of opportunity.

The Academy recognises the need to strike a balance between the work of selectors who exercise academic judgement on the merits of applicants for places or scholarships and the need to ensure that the Academy's Equal Opportunities Policy for Students is fully met. If a candidate complains that his or her application has not been treated in accordance with the policy then the complaint will be referred to the Centre Manager for investigation. An annual report on complaints received will be considered by the Principle.

2. Assessment

The Academy's objective is to provide a fair method of assessment for equality of opportunity to all of its students.

Special arrangements will be made available to students with known disabilities, to compensate for the restrictions imposed by the disability without affecting the validity of examinations and assessments.

When an External Examiner is appointed to examine a course the Academy will draw his or her attention to the Academy's Policy on Equal Opportunities. The Academy expects all external examiners to act in accordance with this policy.

3. Curriculum

The Academy recognises the importance of the development of the individual through the educational process and the role of the curriculum in ensuring that this development is fulfilled.

The Academy is therefore committed to the promotion of equal opportunity with respect to course content, approaches to teaching and learning, assessment methods and the structure and timetabling of courses of study. Further, it will aim to ensure that documents such as course submissions, teaching materials and examination papers reflect the principles of equal opportunities.

The Academy will aim to provide a programme of courses which are of relevance and interest to persons of both sexes and from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds and which are as accessible as possible to people with disabilities, as far as resources permit.

The Academy will encourage perspectives which reflect the cultural diversity of our society and which are neither gender dominated nor ethnocentric.

The Academy will encourage and appraise from an equal opportunities point of view through the process of validation and monitoring the use of a range of teaching approaches as well as assessment methods and will be sensitive to the special needs of under-represented groups in teaching and learning situations.

4. Teaching

All staff and students of the Academy will use language, which is non-discriminatory and is not gratuitously chosen in order to cause offence to particular groups, in the course of teaching and learning. However, it is a fundamental principle of academic freedom that reasoned argument may be employed to test and challenge views, opinions and assertions of all kinds, and in no circumstances may this clause be used to discourage or prevent the exercise of that freedom.

5. Services and Facilities

The Academy is committed to the principle of equal access by all of its students in groups or as individuals to the services it provides and the facilities it offers.

6. Health and Safety

The Academy aims to provide its staff and students with a healthy and safe environment in which to work and live. The enforcement of reasonable health and safety requirements does not constitute discrimination.

The Academy will make every effort to ensure that, so far as reasonably practicable, all parts of the College are accessible and safe. The needs of people with disabilities will be given particular consideration.

The Academy will work as closely as possible with the Students' Union to ensure the security of the students where possible and practical.

7. Training

All Academy staff normally having contact with students will receive a copy of this Policy supplemented by basic training appropriate to their role in the College.

Specific advice and training will be given to Academic staff in relation to recruitment and selection, assessment, tutoring and student disciplinary procedures.