



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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1. Introduction

At GTC Scotland we aim to create a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. GTC Scotland is dedicated to encouraging a supportive and inclusive culture amongst the whole workforce. It is within the best interest of the organisation, our employees and our stakeholders to promote diversity and eliminate discrimination. Our aim is therefore to ensure that all employees, job applicants and stakeholders are given equal opportunity and that our organisation is representative of all sections of society.

GTC Scotland therefore wants to ensure that all of our activities, services and decision-making processes encourage and support participation from and inclusion of everyone. We welcome diversity and recognise the contributions of all individuals working with GTC Scotland. We aim to ensure equality of opportunity by adopting an equitable approach to all that we do and by working to ensure there is no unlawful or unfair discrimination in our policies and practices (formal or informal). This includes reasons associated with the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief (or lack thereof), sex and sexual orientation, and as well as class, personal circumstances and lifestyle.

2. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all GTC Scotland employees, including current and prospective employees, as well as all panel and council members. We expect all employees, panel and council members and anyone working with GTC (for example contractors and secondees) to act in accordance with this policy at all times during their employment with GTC Scotland.

All that we do at GTC Scotland will aim to reflect our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

3. GTC Scotland commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

At GTC we aim to achieve the vision of being a world leading organisation, and equality, diversity and inclusion is an essential part of that. GTC Scotland believes that excellence will be achieved through recognising the value of every individual. We acknowledge the following basic rights for all those currently, or prospectively, involved in carrying out GTC Scotland's functions:

- To be treated with dignity and respect;
- To be treated fairly with regard to all procedures, assessments and choices; and
- To be encouraged to reach their full potential.

Our values

As a national and international education organisation, we work according to a shared set of values that reflect who we are, how we work, and how we treat others. They are:

- **Fairness** — we will treat everyone we work with fairness and in accordance with our equality, diversity and inclusion policies
- **Integrity** — we will act openly, honestly and transparently at all times and with all partners, stakeholders and suppliers

- **Trust and respect** — we will treat all colleagues, partners, stakeholders and suppliers with trust and respect and expect them to do the same for us
- **Professionalism** — we will maintain professional standards individually and collectively in every aspect of our work
- **Sustainability** — we will strive to identify and achieve sustainable ways of working, and continually measure our performance against clearly-defined targets

We believe that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is an essential and integral part of the implementation of our values. To ensure that GTC Scotland continues to meet the General Equality Duty (detailed in section 4), GTC Scotland makes the following commitments:

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all team members are recognised and valued;
- To create a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for every employee;
- To not tolerate any form of intimidation, bullying or harassment and to discipline those that breach this policy;
- To make training, development and progression opportunities available to all employees;
- To promote equality in the workplace;
- To make Equality, Diversity and Inclusion a standing item on all team meeting agendas, to ensure continued discussion around this important area;
- To encourage anyone who feels they have been subject to or witnessed discrimination to raise concerns and to act on any concerns raised;
- To encourage employees to treat everyone with dignity and respect; and
- To regularly review all policies and practices to ensure best practice at all times.

4. Public Sector Equality Duty

GTC Scotland is governed by the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) Order 2011 (**2011 Order**). GTC Scotland is required to perform its functions in a way that encourages equal opportunities.

In 2010 the new Equality Act 2010 (**the Act**) came into force creating new and more extensive requirements for employers like GTC Scotland. The Act covers discrimination of one (or more) or the nine 'protected characteristics'. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This update also introduced a duty on bodies like GTC Scotland to work towards, which includes:

- a. Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- b. Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- c. Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This is known as the 'general equality duty'.

This policy is aimed to help all GTC Scotland employees and council members to understand this duty and how each person involved with GTC Scotland can, and should, work individually and together to promote equality, diversity and inclusion within GTC Scotland.

The Policy in Practice

5. Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by gathering and analysing information on the protected characteristics using equality monitoring forms, ongoing employee surveys and any other appropriate means.

Information gathered will be used to identify areas where there may be inequalities, or the potential for inequality, among employees, panel members or council members, to seek to ensure that no discrimination is taking place within GTC Scotland.

All information gathered through GTC Scotland's equality monitoring will be entirely anonymous, will be treated with the strictest confidence and will only be used for the statistical purposes set out below:

- To promote diversity and inclusion by identifying areas where certain groups might be under-represented.
- To identify areas where there may be inequalities, or the potential for inequality, among employees, panel members or council members, and seek to ensure that no discrimination is taking place within GTC Scotland.

We will aim to monitor the following:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender Identity;
- Gender Re-assignment;
- Ethnicity;
- Marriage and Civil Partnership;
- Pregnancy and Maternity;
- Race;
- Religion;
- Sex; and
- Sexual orientation.

6. Recruitment and Selection Processes

GTC Scotland's long-term aim is to ensure that our employees, and all those involved with GTC Scotland, reflect the diversity of the community around us. In order to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in our recruitment and selection processes, we will:

- Operate fair and inclusive recruitment and employment practices to achieve our operational needs;
- Strive to achieve equality of opportunity in all areas of employment;

- Seek to maintain a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of other communities we serve.
- Work to improve the promotion of GTCs employment opportunities within all communities.

Policies and procedures related to the recruitment and selection of all those involved in carrying out GTC Scotland's functions will be monitored regularly to ensure that they comply with this policy, current legislation and any codes of practice or other relevant best practice guidance.

GTC Scotland takes a positive approach to diversity ensuring that we select the best person for the job based on merit alone and free from bias on the grounds of factors such as age, disability, gender or race that are not relevant to the person's ability to do the job. Those with responsibility for recruitment and selection processes must ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly (as defined in the appendix to this policy) with regard to the following:

- Drafting job specifications and application forms;
- Advertising internally and externally;
- Selection for interviews/tests;
- Checking of references.

All recruitment adverts should clearly state GTC Scotland commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and our aim to create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all team members are recognised and valued. Efforts must be made by those involved in the recruitment process to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, including recognising and eliminating as far as possible any unconscious bias.

In order to do this, the following recruitment principles should be followed:

- All job adverts should be posted in a wide range of forums to ensure a wide range of potential applicants are reached;
- All job adverts should be made available, upon request, in alternative formats to ensure accessibility by those with any disability or difficulty in reading text;
- Avoid using any age-related criteria, which may include specifying length of experience which could potentially be seen to be discriminatory against both younger workers and men or women who have taken career breaks;
- Be sure to 'reality check' your selection criteria to ensure they do not include any content that is potentially discriminatory or unreasonably excludes certain groups without justification; and
- We will continue to use, as appropriate, 'blind' applications, removing any categorising information (for example, name, age, gender or race) to remove the possibility of any initial unconscious bias or whether there is any more appropriate method to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion in the recruitment process

7. Working Environments and Reasonable Adjustments

GTC Scotland's aim is to have a working environment and culture where everyone feels comfortable and treated with dignity and respect. For further information on our values in relation to respect at work, please read the [GTC Scotland Respect at Work Policy](#).

All GTC Scotland stakeholders

GTC Scotland welcomes people with disabilities. All efforts will be made to make adjustments wherever reasonably practicable for disabled employees, applicants for posts, GTC Scotland Council or panel members making a reasonable request.

We will do our best to make any necessary reasonable adjustments to arrangements and/or our facilities to enable anyone working with GTC Scotland who has a disability and is carrying out GTC Scotland's functions to perform their roles to the best of their ability.

Recruitment and Appointments Process

During our recruitment and appointment process, for employees as well as for Council and Panel members and any external appointments we may make, we will make every reasonable effort to adjust the application and selection process to meet the needs of candidates with disabilities. Disabled candidates will be given the opportunity at an early stage in the procedure to discuss any particular requirements that they might have in relation to their disability.

Visitors to GTC Scotland

We will also do our best to make reasonable adjustments to arrangements for GTC Scotland meetings, events and hearings where we are made aware that a disabled individual has particular needs or requirements.

8. Access to Information

Information will be made available in suitable formats, such as other languages (e.g. Gaelic), large print, Braille or recorded, where needed to meet the needs of any individual requiring access to that information.

9. Procurement

When procuring goods or services, we will require suppliers to comply with this policy. As part of our tendering procedure, we are committed to obtaining evidence from potential suppliers that they have, where appropriate, policies in place to ensure that the services they provide are in line with the GTC Scotland equality, diversity and inclusion principles.

10. Religion and Belief

GTC Scotland will:

- Seek to ensure, where practicable and subject to business requirements, that cultural and religious festivals, holidays and rights of worship are acknowledged and recognised;
- Where reasonably practicable, seek to ensure that meetings, events and hearings are not scheduled on cultural or religious festivals which could prevent people from attending;
- Ensure leave is not unreasonably withheld from employees who may wish to celebrate cultural and religious festivals; and

- Not impose dress restrictions on employees or any person carrying out GTC Scotland's functions which may be discriminatory and cannot be objectively justified.

While GTC Scotland does all it can to recognise and accommodate each individual's requirements, we recognise that we may have areas that require some improvement. Any employee, panel or council member who wishes to discuss any matter relating to their religion and belief and any requirements that they wish implemented in GTC Scotland, should speak to whomever they feel most comfortable discussing the situation with, whether it is their direct manager, a member of the management team, an HR officer or a council member, for example. GTC Scotland will take into account individual preferences and requirements but reserves the right to make decisions appropriate to the business needs of the organisation.

11. Service Delivery

All of GTC Scotland's stakeholders, both internal and external, are eligible to receive the same quality and level of service regardless of their individual differences. GTC Scotland will ensure that those involved in service delivery are trained to provide an appropriate and informed response to all customers and stakeholders.

We will provide information about our services which is accessible to all. In consultation with stakeholders, GTC Scotland will endeavour to deliver services in ways which are appropriate to the needs of different groups, removing where possible any barriers which may deny access.

12. Equality Impact Assessments

All new GTC Scotland policies and projects will be screened to assess their relevance to and impact on equality, diversity and inclusion. Where a policy or project does have some impact on equality, diversity and inclusion, an equality impact assessment will be carried out by the person responsible for the policy or project.

Equality Impact Assessments are a way to make sure individuals and teams think carefully about the likely impact of their work on both employees and service users and take action to improve activities, where appropriate. It is also important to record the thought process behind each new policy or project and clearly show that equality, diversity and inclusion has been fully considered and a decision has been made on any impact that the policy or project may have on equality, diversity and inclusion.

13. Complaints and further information

Anyone involved in carrying out GTC Scotland's functions (including all employees, Panel or Council Members and any appointees or secondees) who feels that they have suffered any form of discrimination that they believe does not follow the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion should be confident, and are strongly encouraged, to raise the concern with the appropriate person.

Anyone wishing to raise a concern in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion should speak to whomever they feel most comfortable discussing the situation with. In order that we can consider and address any concerns you wish to raise as quickly as possible, we would suggest that the most appropriate route would be to speak with your Director or a member of HR, in confidence. Any such

concerns that are raised will be dealt with in a timely and sensitive manner in accordance with any other relevant or applicable policies. If you do not believe that your concerns have been dealt with sufficiently, you should follow the grievance process which is set out in the [GTC Scotland Grievance Policy](#).

Any external stakeholders who believe that they have been discriminated against by GTC Scotland or that we have not fulfilled our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and wish to raise the matter, should do so through our complaints procedure set out [on our website](#).

Harassment of employees by third parties will be treated very seriously. Should any such harassment take place, action will be taken to prevent it from happening again and anyone experiencing this should follow the guidance above.

14. Disciplinary Action for breach of the policy

Acts of discrimination or harassment by employees in the course of their employment will be investigated and, if found proven, will lead to disciplinary action. Acts of discrimination or harassment by Council members or appointees will lead to further action being taken in accordance with the terms of the GTC Scotland Code of Conduct and Membership Scheme.

As stated above, harassment of employees by any external stakeholders or third parties will be treated very seriously. Should any such harassment take place, action will be taken to prevent it from happening again and anyone experiencing this should follow the guidance above.

Reference should also be made to the [GTC Scotland Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](#), to highlight the behaviour that GTC Scotland will not tolerate and further action, beyond the scope of this Policy, that may be taken in such circumstances.

15. Terms and conditions of employment

We will not apply unjustifiable requirements regarding our terms of employment or working practices. Care will be taken to ensure that all policies and procedures do not include elements which will unfairly and adversely impact on different groups of employees.

16. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure it continues to meet the needs of GTC Scotland, employees, council members and all of GTC Scotland's stakeholders.

Appendix 1

Definitions

Protected characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. They are:

age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Equality is about ensuring that the individual requirements of different people and different communities are taken into account. It is important to note that equality does not simply mean treating everyone the same, but recognising and respecting each other's differences; it means tackling discrimination in all its forms.

Diversity is the term used to describe the uniqueness of each individual in the population. It refers to all of the characteristics that make individuals different from each other. Diversity is the main distinct characteristic that employees bring to our organisation. These distinct characteristics bring variations of thinking, communication styles, skills and personalities that are respected and valued.

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Associative

This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a particular protected characteristic.

Perceptive

This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic or aspect of a protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Discrimination arising from disability is when a person is treated unfavourably because of something arising as a consequence of their disability.

Indirect Discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or practice that appears to apply equally to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a particular aspect of a protected characteristic.

This kind of discrimination can be justified if it can be shown that you acted reasonably, i.e. that it is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. A legitimate aim might be any lawful decision you make in running your organisation, if the sole aim is to reduce costs is likely to be unlawful.

Harassment is unwanted behaviour that violates a person's dignity or creates a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating or offensive environment.

Victimisation is punishing or treating someone unfairly because they have made a complaint of discrimination or because they have supported someone else who made a complaint of discrimination.

Duty to make reasonable adjustments means that where a disabled person is at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to people who are not disabled, there is a duty to take reasonable steps to remove that disadvantage by (i) changing provisions, criteria or practices; (ii) altering, removing or providing reasonable alternative to physical features; or (iii) providing auxiliary aids.