The City College
WHERE STUDENTS COME FIRST

Equality and Diversity Policy

Document Summary

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Equality and Diversity – Policy & Practice

1: Background

The City College recognises that its students and staff are central to its success. Only by ensuring equality of opportunity and actively upholding freedom of speech can the College be confident that it is recruiting from the widest available pool of potential students and employees and, in accepting this as one of its central values, it fully recognises its responsibility under the law.

This means that The City College is dedicated to the establishment and continuous nurture of a culture of equal opportunities and free expression throughout the organisation and is fully committed to:

- Providing equality of opportunity for all students and staff.
- Working to remove systemic barriers in order to increase inclusive participation, fair access, progression and representation and belonging.
- Freedom from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, colour, gender identity and/or expression, marital or civil partnership status, disability, sexual orientation, religious, spiritual or political beliefs, age or social class.
- Widening scope beyond protected characteristics and recognising groups that may face disadvantage in higher education, including care-experienced students, carers, estranged students, first-generation students, mature learners, refugees and asylum seekers in order to widen participation and student success.
- Improving accessibility for disabled and neurodiverse students through reasonable adjustments, digital accessibility, accessible teaching and assessment and inclusive communication.
- Securing freedom of speech within the law for students, staff, and visiting speakers.
- Promoting the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom.

The Equality Act 2010 brings together and extends existing equality legislation and identifies the following as protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 also identifies direct discrimination and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably because an individual has, or someone else thinks they have, a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination involves the

application of a practice, policy or rule which applies to everyone in the same way, but it has a worse effect on some people than others and puts the individual at a particular disadvantage.

The Act also regards harassment as a form of discrimination, which includes online harassment and discrimination. Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to the protected characteristics which an individual finds offensive or which makes the individual feel intimidated or humiliated. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination. Treating another person less favourably because the other has rejected or submitted to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature is also regarded as harassment.

In order to act transparently, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Equality should be considered. This involves the accessibility benefits and risks of AI, the potential bias in AI systems and the fair and transparent use of any AI tools. Human oversight is essential in decision-making.

Please note: The College's duty to secure freedom of speech within the law does not protect speech that is unlawful, such as harassment, incitement to violence, or illegal hate speech. The College will continue to deal with unlawful speech through the appropriate disciplinary and complaints procedures.

2: Responsibility for implementation of Equality & Diversity Policy

Overall responsibility for the development and implementation of equality and diversity and the duties on freedom of speech throughout The City College lies with the Managing Director. Their involvement and activity are supported by:

- The Director of Student Records
- The In-house Legal Counsel
- Head of Admissions
- The Student Welfare Officer
- Programme Leaders in relation to all teaching and assessment activities within their remit

All staff members are now responsible for upholding the duties on freedom of speech.

The Managing Director, working through the individuals listed above, will ensure that all staff and students are made aware of the Equality and Diversity Policy and procedures. All employees and students of The City College are responsible for ensuring that all their actions are carried out in terms of the general policy and codes of practice. Any individual may be held personally accountable if any complaint should be made.

3: Practical application of the Equality and Diversity Policy

The general policy is applicable to all aspects of employment and academic life within The City College. This includes: advertisements / recruitment / pay / terms and conditions of employment / training / redeployment / benefits / promotions / grievance and disciplinary procedures / curriculum development / teaching and assessment / course accreditation and admissions practices.

In order to aim for continual improvement, the College commits to monitoring recruitment, admissions, retention, progression, awarding outcomes, student complaints data, including monitoring protected characteristics and other underrepresented groups.

In all these areas, the College will also give particular regard to its duties on freedom of speech. The City College will also take into account equality and diversity considerations when entering into contractual agreements with other organisations.

Additionally:

- Individuals not employed by The City College, such as visitors and external contractors, are expected to operate within the general terms of this policy. The College is also subject to a duty to secure freedom of speech for visiting speakers.
- The general policy applies to existing, as well as potential, employees and students.

4: Implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy

Consultation with staff and students may form part of the process of implementing the Equality and Diversity Policy:

- New staff and students will be informed of their responsibilities regarding acceptance and implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy and the College's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech during the process of their induction to The City College and, additionally, at appropriate times during their involvement with the College.
- Where considered appropriate, training will be provided to assist with implementing The City College Equality and Diversity Policy and the duties on freedom of speech.

5: Complaints from either staff or students

Any complaint made with regard to any aspect of inequality will be dealt with within the terms of the appropriate complaints procedures. The College will also provide a complaints procedure for breaches of the freedom of speech duties.

6: Equality and Diversity – Employees

The City College is committed to operating as an equality and diversity employer, thereby ensuring that people from all aspects of society are represented at all levels of employment. This is important from the point of view of the long-term successful operation of The City College, and also for the provision of role models. The City College seeks to:

- Eliminate any discrimination at each stage of the recruitment process and for as long as any individual remains in employment within the College.
- Identify and eliminate any discriminatory practice.
- Redress any employment imbalances.
- Ensure that all employees, in all parts of the organisation and/or acting on its behalf, are aware of, and operate within, the Equality and Diversity Policy and the duties on freedom of speech.

The Practice

All aspects of recruitment, selection and day-to-day working will be carried out in accordance with The City College Equality and Diversity Policy. The following will also apply:

- In most cases, posts, either temporary or permanent, will be advertised. Selection for all posts will be based on objective criteria, including job descriptions, person specifications and evidence of competence in the area for which they will be employed.
- The City College will endeavour to develop patterns of work that are consistent with equality and diversity policies and practices.
- Staff will be supported in participating, on an equitable basis, in training and education linked to continuous professional development.
- Employees who feel they have been discriminated against on the grounds of a protected characteristic should feel able to make use of the appropriate complaints procedure. This now also applies to complaints regarding a breach of freedom of speech rights.

Feedback and monitoring

The Managing Director and Director of Student Records are responsible for monitoring applications, appointments and methods of work. A record of complaints received in relation to Equality and Diversity, and freedom of speech, will be kept as part of The City College system of recording all complaints.

7: Equality and Diversity – Students

The City College is committed to ensuring that all students have equality of opportunity throughout their programme of study and are free from any form of discriminatory practice by the College or any individual referred to in the Equality and Diversity Policy. Any complaints relating to equality and diversity will be dealt with according to The City College Complaints Policy and Procedure for students. This must be considered alongside the freedom of speech complaints scheme, which the OfS regulates.

Student Recruitment

Activity will include the following:

- Course publicity will ensure that it is evident that The City College welcomes students from all sectors of society. Such publicity will include a statement of the College's commitment to equality and diversity and its duties on freedom of speech where appropriate.
- Throughout the admissions process, selection criteria will take note of The City College guidelines on Equality and Diversity and the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. The College must also ensure that its admissions practices uphold freedom of speech.
- The induction process will include an explanation of the Equality and Diversity Policy, as well as the complaints procedure and student disciplinary procedure. This must also include a formal explanation of the College's duties on freedom of speech, the Code of Practice, and the complaints scheme.

Teaching and Learning

- The content of course units and teaching/learning strategies will reflect, as appropriate, the needs of education in, and for, a diverse society while also providing a platform for the free and open exchange of a wide range of lawful ideas, views, and beliefs.
- All Programme Leaders and all unit tutors are responsible for ensuring that course content (within parameters like learning outcomes), teaching and treatment of students are consistent with The City College Equality and Diversity Policy and the duties on freedom of speech.

8: Useful Resources

- Office for Students (OfS)**:** https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/16
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA): https://www.oiahe.org.uk/