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## **Equal Opportunities Policy**

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<b>Responsibility for policy:</b>	Human Resource Manager
<b>Responsibility for implementation:</b>	Human Resource Manager

## 1. **INTRODUCTION**

### 1.1 **General**

Business & Computing Examinations recognises that it is essential to provide equal opportunities to all persons without discrimination. This policy sets out the organisation's position on equal opportunity in all aspects of staff employment, Centre recruitment, registration and promotion, and provides guidance and encouragement to employees at all levels to act fairly and prevent discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act.

The exam board aims to ensure that no centre applicant or staff receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, gender orientation, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origin, age, gender, gender reassignment or marital status, sexual orientation or disability. Selection criteria and procedures are regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. All staff will be given equal opportunity and access to training to enable them to progress both within and outside the organisation. The exam board is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and will bring it to the attention of all staff.

BCE is committed to a policy of equal opportunities for all staff members, registered students and applicants and shall adhere to such a policy at all times and will review on an on-going basis on all aspects of recruitment to avoid unlawful or undesirable discrimination. Business & Computing Examinations will treat everyone equally irrespective of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, political beliefs and places an obligation upon all staff to respect and act in accordance with the policy. Business & Computing Examinations is committed to providing training for all its staff in equal opportunities practice.

Business & Computing Examinations shall not discriminate unlawfully when deciding which temporary staff is submitted for a vacancy or assignment, or in any terms of employment or terms of engagement for temporary workers. This also applies centres. BCE will ensure that each centre is assessed only in accordance with the centre's merits and ability to perform the relevant duties required by BCE.

### 1.2 **Definition of Discrimination**

(a) Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Both forms of discrimination must be avoided.

(b) Direct discrimination occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another on grounds relating to sex, race, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

(c) Indirect discrimination occurs where a requirement is imposed which can be complied with by a smaller proportion of persons of a particular sex, race, marital

status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion, than persons in another group and which is not objectively justifiable in the given situation. Examples include:

- seeking job applications only from persons under 30 years of age and with five years' or more post-graduate experience;
- demanding technical qualifications for a job which are not strictly necessary;
- sending only full time staff on training courses.

### 1.3 **Equalities policy statement**

BCE wants to create a culture where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated and valued. We are totally committed to achieving equality of opportunity in service delivery and employment. Local and foreign students who seek educational services and staff members will be treated fairly and without discrimination.

Discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, age or any other unjustifiable criterion will not be tolerated.

BCE is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination (including harassment of any kind). The exam board will take appropriate action wherever instances of discrimination and harassment occur, in the delivery of services and in the course of employment. We will work effortlessly to develop effective procedures and policies to combat all forms of unlawful discrimination and to share good practice.

(a) It is the policy of BCE to ensure that no centre applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable. The organisation is committed not only to its legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment and examinations.

(b) The organisation recognises that adhering to the Equal Opportunities Policy, combined with relevant employment policies and practices, maximises the effective use of individuals in both the centre's and candidates' best interests.

(c) The application of recruitment, examinations, and promotion policies to all centres will be on the basis of exam requirements and the centre's ability and merits.

(d) All staff will be made aware of the provisions of this policy.

### 1.4 **Staff/Centre recruitment and delivery of Educational Services**

BCE will ensure that all services are provided fairly and without discrimination. Reasonable adjustments will be made so that services are accessible to everyone who needs them. Centres and candidates with cultural needs will be recognised and services will be provided which are appropriate to these needs.

The exam board takes complaints seriously. Centres and staff, who feel they have been unfairly treated, have the right to use the exam board's complaints procedure.

(a) Advertisements for posts will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability for the post. Information about vacant posts will be provided in such a manner that does not restrict its audience in terms of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion.

(b) Centre recruitment literature will not imply a preference for one group of applicants.

(c) All vacancies will be circulated internally.

(d) All descriptions and specifications for posts will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.

(e) All selection will be thorough, conducted against defined criteria and will deal only with the applicant's suitability for the job. Where it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to job requirements and asked to all candidates.

## 1.5 **Employment**

The exam board will work towards creating a workforce which reflects London and the different countries we operate in's diverse population. We will ensure that no-one is unfairly discriminated against when applying for a job or during the course of their employment with the exam board.

All employees have equal access to training and career development regardless of any of the considerations mentioned above. Where required, we will consider introduction of monitoring in other equalities areas. The purpose of monitoring is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Equal Opportunities Policy and take action where evidence shows unfair treatment.

An employee who has a concern regarding unfair discrimination or harassment at work may use one of the exam board's formal procedures e.g. grievance, bullying and harassment.

(a) BCE will not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion in the allocation of duties between employees employed at any level with comparable job descriptions.

(b) BCE will put in place any reasonable measures and/or adjustments within the workplace for those employees who become disabled during employment or for disabled appointees.

(c) All employees will be considered solely on their merits for career development and promotion with equal opportunities for all.

### **Responsibility of BCE Staff**

BCE requires all its employees to behave in ways that promote equality and are non-racist, non-sexist and generally non-discriminatory. This applies to the way they behave to members of the public in the delivery of services and to other employees in the course of their work.

Employees should participate actively in ensuring that there is equality of opportunity and non-discrimination. Employees should also draw the attention of management to alleged unlawful or unfair discriminatory acts or practices.

Should employees, through the course of their employment, be found to have caused or encouraged discrimination, this will be regarded as a particularly serious offence, rendering them liable to disciplinary action.

### **1.6 Training**

(a) Employees will be provided with appropriate training regardless of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion.

(b) All employees will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with management.

### **1.7 Monitoring**

(a) It is the responsibility of the Human Resource Manager to ensure that all aspects of this policy are kept under review and are operated throughout the exam board.

(b) Where it appears that applicants/staff are not being offered equal opportunities, circumstances will be investigated to identify any policies or criteria which exclude or discourage certain individuals and, if so, whether these are justifiable.

### **1.8 Grievances and victimisation**

BCE emphasises that discrimination is unacceptable conduct which may lead to disciplinary action under the organisation's Disciplinary Regulations.

### **Implementation**

In order to ensure its effective implementation, the exam board undertakes, through senior personnel and individual members of staff, to:

(i) Identify a senior officer of the exam board to have overall responsibility for the Policy.

(ii) Appoint suitably qualified and trained officers to assist the senior officer with responsibility for the Policy in formulating, implementing and monitoring the Policy and to advise the exam board in equal opportunity matters.

- (iii) Appoint representatives who will be accessible to centres and staff to provide information about the Equal Opportunities Policy, grievance procedures, and relay Equal Opportunities suggestions and concerns to appropriate channels.
- (iv) Have an Equal Opportunities Working Group to advise, via the exam board's Committee Structure, on all matters relating to the formulation, implementation, evaluation and review of equal opportunities policies across the exam board.
- (v) Consult, as appropriate, with staff and centre representatives on equal opportunity matters through the existing consultation procedures.
- (vi) Review regularly and, where necessary, revise the composition of exam board Committees and other official bodies and representatives of the exam board to take into account representation of minority groups and gender balance, recognising that this may not always be possible where representation is by election.
- (vii) Provide training for staff normally involved in recruitment and selection, development and review, job evaluation, promotion and training to make them aware of the equal opportunities implications of these activities.
- (viii) Implement and maintain a statistical record in the areas of race, gender and disability relating to staff recruitment and progression and student recruitment and success.
- (ix) Review regularly and, where necessary, make recommendations on the access and safety facilities in the exam board with particular regard to people with disabilities. In any future planning of new buildings or of alterations to existing buildings, the exam board will seek, where possible, to ensure that there is proper provision for all types of disability. The exam board will also address the provision of facilities and access to areas for people with disabilities including teaching materials and support for mental health difficulties.
- (x) Send information about the policy to all existing and newly appointed members of staff and students to remind them of the commitment of exam board staff and centres to equal opportunities.
- (xi) Review regularly and, where necessary, revise all written communications, internal or external, produced by the exam board to ensure that the language is non-discriminatory and gender neutral.
- (xii) Keep under regular review the provision of family friendly policies for staff and centres.