

# Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) POLICY

## OPEN TRAINING COLLEGE

### 1. Introduction

The College is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and students irrespective of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, nationality or ethnic or national origin, membership of the travelling community or a person's socio-economic status.

The Open Training College also operates in accordance with the St. Michael's House Dignity at Work and Equal Opportunities policies, which have been designed to ensure compliance with the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2021).

The concept of equality is central to the shared values and ethos of the Open Training College. The principles and practice of equality are intrinsic to the way we conduct our business and working relationships and the shared values we hold. Furthermore, the College supports the concept of 'equity' for students and through its provision of 'reasonable accommodation' and student supports seeks to ensure that such equity is achieved.

Through its policies and procedures related to entry, the College seeks to ensure that the student body represents the diversity to be found in society and through its pedagogy, delivery, accessibility and support measures further seeks to ensure that each individual student is provided with a sense of real inclusion, as part of their cohort, year group, communities of practice and College community.

All our staff and students bring their own background, work style, distinct capabilities, experience and characteristics to their work. We recognise that our diverse College reflects the diversity of the wider community and we want to utilise the widest range of skills, knowledge and experience in our College while complying with legislative requirements.

As well as treating people with dignity and respect, the College strives to create a supportive environment in which both staff and students can flourish and reach their full potential, regardless of differences, experience or education. Harnessing the wide range of perspectives this diversity brings promotes innovation and inclusion.

## 2. Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Bias</b>	<p>Refers to one’s background, personal experiences, societal stereotypes and cultural context which can have an impact on decisions and actions.</p> <p>This can be either conscious or unconscious. Unconscious or implicit bias happens by our brains making incredibly quick judgments and assessments of people and situations using these biases.</p>
<b>Discrimination</b>	<p>Treatment or potential treatment that is less favourable based on the ten equality grounds. This includes direct and indirect discrimination.</p> <p><b>Direct Discrimination:</b> occurs when one person is treated less favourably than someone else due to one or more of the ten equality grounds.</p> <p><b>Indirect Discrimination:</b> occurs when an apparently neutral practice or policy puts someone belonging to one or more of the ten equality grounds at a disadvantage in comparison to someone else. This includes when there is a practice or policy that has a worse effect on certain groups or individuals.</p> <p><b>Discrimination by Association:</b> where a person is treated less favourably due to an association with someone belonging to one or more of the ten equality grounds.</p> <p><b>Discrimination by Imputation:</b> when a person is treated less favourably due to being labelled as belonging to one or more of the ten equality grounds.</p>
<b>Diversity</b>	<p>Understanding, appreciating and embracing differences and practising mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from the majority.</p>
<b>EDI data monitoring</b>	<p>Processes around collection, analysing, storing and reporting on equality grounds within the broad College community.</p>

<b>EDI mainstreaming</b>	<p>Ensures that the principle of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, along with the protection of all human rights are embedded and mainstreamed into every aspect of college life.</p> <p>This includes a requirement to assess the impact of policies, procedures, practices and communications in furthering the principles of equality, equity, diversity, inclusion and fairness.</p>
<b>Equality</b>	<p>Ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are not treated less favourably through discrimination (either direct or indirect) or bias.</p>
<b>Equality Grounds</b>	<p>The following 10 protected grounds are defined under the Employment Equality Act 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gender</b></li> <li>• <b>Civil Status</b></li> <li>• <b>Family Status</b></li> <li>• <b>Sexual Orientation</b></li> <li>• <b>Disability</b></li> <li>• <b>Race</b></li> <li>• <b>Religious Belief</b></li> <li>• <b>Member of the Traveller Community</b></li> <li>• <b>Age</b></li> <li>• <b>Socio-economic status</b></li> </ul>
<b>Equity</b>	<p>Fairness on the basis that everyone starts from the same place of access. Equity considers the presence of privilege as well as the presence of restricted opportunity. This may include positive action measures (defined below) in order to pursue greater equality of outcome.</p>
<b>Inclusion</b>	<p>Is a sense of belonging; feeling respected and valued; feeling a level of support and commitment from others so that one can achieve their best at work and study.</p>
<b>Positive Action</b>	<p>Defined by the Employment Equality Act as measures maintained or newly adopted with a view to ensuring full equality in practice to mitigate the impact or potential impact of disadvantage linked to any of the ten equality grounds.</p>

<b>Socio-economic-status</b>	A combined economic and sociological measure economic and social position in relation to others, based on the income, education, and occupation of an individual and their family.
<b>Universal Design / Universal Design for Learning (UDL)</b>	<p>Ensures the design and composition of an environment so that it may be accessed, understood and used to the greatest possible extent in the most independent and natural manner possible in the widest possible range of situations without the need for adaptation, modification, assistive devices or specialised solutions, by any persons of any age or size or having any particular physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual ability or disability.</p> <p>This definition incorporates the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in designing educational opportunities throughout the College.</p>

### 3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote equality of opportunity for all staff and students of the Open Training College by ensuring that all administrative, academic and other practices operate on the basis of the appropriate merits, qualifications, abilities and potential of individuals, and do not discriminate against any individual on any of the grounds outlined in the Employment Equality Act, 2021.

In addition, the College will:

- take positive action where appropriate to assist in advancing equality in employment and College activities to address under-representation;
- promote equality in education for all students across the education cycle, providing an excellent education for all, and enabling all students to maximise their potential; to take positive action in education to address widening participation and under-representation as appropriate;
- identify opportunities for positive action to ensure equality of participation for underrepresented groups in College activities.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities as tutors, assessors, administrators, managers, and representatives of the College under the provisions of national legislation and the policies of the College.
- To ensure that all applicants to the College are treated fairly and in accordance with published policies and procedures and have equality of access to programmes and services.
- To ensure that the College affords all students an equal opportunity to develop their full potential; the policies, procedures and practices of the College in relation to teaching, learning and assessment will seek to ensure equality of opportunity for all students.

#### **4. Scope**

This policy and associated procedures apply to all individuals at Open Training College including all students, core and associate academic staff and stakeholders engaged with the OTC.

#### **5. Policy Statement**

Open Training College (OTC) is committed to the development, maintenance and support of a policy of equal opportunity for staff, students and prospective staff and students. The OTC has and will continue to develop policies, procedures and practices that comply with the Equality Employment Acts 1998-2021 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018. OTC is committed to the eradication of unfair and discriminatory practices, direct and indirect, however and whenever they occur, and ensures that concepts of diversity and equality/equity of opportunity, along with the promotion of real inclusivity, are enshrined in its values and objectives.

The College will provide inclusive access to services and information to people with disabilities and promote the employment of people with disabilities in accordance with the Disability Act 2005.

#### **EDI in Student Life**

OTC recognises and implements the philosophy that equality of treatment in the College educational environment is a fundamental right. To this end College endeavours to devise and implement procedures which will ensure that no student or potential student will receive less favourable treatment than any other because of age (subject to the College's regulations in regard to minimum

age of entry), nationality or ethnic or national origin, gender, civil status, family status, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or membership of the traveller community.

The College will ensure equality of access, opportunity and experience for students by ensuring its procedures in relation to admission, delivery of education and related supports, assessment, progression and award, etc., do not discriminate directly or indirectly against any student on any of the nine equality grounds or on the basis of socio-economic disadvantage.

#### Equity:

Specific measures within the College which support the realisation of Equity include:

- Procedures for the provision of supports to students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties
- Reasonable accommodation will be made for prospective students who supply evidence of this need in advance of an Applicants' Day/interview
- A 'Learner Support Plan' is put in place for all enrolled students who have supplied evidence of the need for additional supports
- The provisions of the Student Support policy
- Incorporating UDL (Universal Design for Learning) into assessment strategies

#### Diversity:

The College values the enrichment that comes from a diverse community of students and staff and is committed to preventing opportunity for discrimination in the access, experience, progression and achievement of all students and staff through developing and implementing fair and transparent policies and practices.

#### Inclusion:

We strive to create an environment in which all members of our community should expect to be able to thrive, be respected and have a real opportunity to participate in and contribute to College activities so that they can achieve their fullest potential.

For students experiencing difficulties the College provides:

- An assigned personal Tutor for each stage of study
- A dedicated Health & Wellbeing Officer

- Our professional, clinical partner, Spectrum Life, which provides dedicated support to our students in relation to a range of topics including self-care, wellbeing, managing anxiety, supporting sleep, financial concerns, parenting, mindfulness etc. Spectrum Life services include the availability of counselling for students if required.

The College will not tolerate harassment or bullying of staff, students or other members of the community. Failure of a student to comply can result in disciplinary action under the Disciplinary procedure.

### **EDI in the Workplace**

The aim of the policy is to promote equality of opportunity for OTC staff members. The College ensures that, through its recruitment and selection policy and procedures, it provides equality of opportunities for employment so that the workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves. In addition, the College is committed to the achievement of equality of opportunity for all staff in career development, training, promotion and re-grading.

The College monitors and reviews employment policies and practices to ensure that they do not, directly or indirectly, discriminate unfairly against individual members of staff or particular groups of staff.

A copy of this policy and related policies are included in the QA Document (QuAD), OTC Staff handbook and the SMH Human Resources Policies and Procedures documentation. Attention to this information is drawn to at all induction programmes for new staff.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Recruitment Policy and CPD Policy.

In relation to staff members in particular:

1. Candidates will be selected on the basis of merit and ability, consistent with the operational requirements of the role, and having regard to the principles of this Policy. Selection recommendations will be made by gender balanced selection boards in so far as reasonably practicable.
2. All members of the College community are expected to treat others with dignity and respect, in line with the relevant College policies.

3. The College is committed to equality and non-discrimination in all areas of employment, including recruitment and selection, promotions, learning and development and terms and conditions of employment.
4. The College will offer the same development and training opportunities to all staff to achieve high standards of performance.
5. Staff will be promoted on the basis of merit.
6. It is our policy to ensure that as much accommodation as possible is carried out to facilitate the participation of individuals with additional needs in the recruitment process and in the workplace.

The College will not tolerate harassment or bullying of staff, students or other members of the community. Failure of a member of staff to comply can result in disciplinary action under the Dignity at Work policy.

Spectrum Life services include the availability of counselling for staff members, and the other services as listed above for students, if required.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

The College Director has ultimate executive responsibility for the effective development and implementation of academic policies.

The Head of Quality & Academic Affairs has overall delegated responsibility for coordinating the day-to-day operation of the policies and the development, maintenance and monitoring of supporting procedures.

Programme Directors and Tutors are responsible for pursuing the implementation of these policies in relation to the activities of their programmes.

The College and its parent organisation (St. Michael's House) ensure compliance with legislation and adherence to standards of best practice and have the responsibility to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

Each individual has a role under the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy:

- Responsible for making themselves aware of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.



- Responsible for their behaviour and expected to treat others with dignity and respect and to challenge inappropriate behaviour or discrimination.
- Responsible for ensuring that their programmes of work, teaching content and resources should demonstrate sensitivity to equality and diversity issues.

Managers and Department Heads across the College have a specific responsibility to:

- To understand and promote the principles of equity and human rights.
- Demonstrate positive behaviour as set out by this policy and to manage unacceptable behaviour within their teams in accordance with relevant policies.
- Actively participate in and promote participation in training and activities pertaining to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters.
- Ensure the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the protection of Human Rights are considered in all aspects of planning, decision making and policy development.
- Respond to and actively seek to resolve equality and discrimination complaints.

<b>Policy Title:</b>		<b>EDI Policy</b>
<b>OTC Policy No</b>		<b>2401</b>
<b>Version</b>		<b>1.0</b>
<b>Date approved:</b> June 2024	<b>Date policy will take effect:</b> June 2024	<b>Date of Next Review:</b> 2 years
<b>Approving Authority:</b>		<b>Academic Council</b>
<b>Document Owner/Contact:</b>		<b>Head of Quality &amp; Academic Affairs</b>
<b>Supporting documents, procedures &amp; forms of this policy:</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment Policy</li> <li>• CPD Policy</li> <li>• Student Supports Policy</li> <li>• Support for students with Disabilities and Specific Learning difficulties</li> <li>• Academic Integrity Policy</li> <li>• Complaints Policy and Procedures</li> <li>• Dignity at Work Policy (SMH)</li> <li>• Equal Opportunities policy (SMH)</li> </ul>

<b>Audience:</b>	Public – accessible to anyone
<b>Reference(s)</b>	Employment Equality Acts (1998-2021) Equal Status Acts (2000-2018) Disability Act, 2005  Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) – <a href="http://www.ihrec.ie">www.ihrec.ie</a>  Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) – <a href="http://www.teni.ie">www.teni.ie</a>  National Disability Authority (NDA) – <a href="http://www.nda.ie">www.nda.ie</a>