



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Sol Institute is committed to treating all employees and applicants equally regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation or marital status, disability or age and ensuring that all employees and applicants have equality of opportunity.

APPLYING THE POLICY

This policy applies to the advertisement of jobs, recruitment and appointment to them, promotion, and training, conditions of work, pay and to every other aspect of employment. The policy also applies to the treatment and service provided to learners.

Recruitment, selection and developmental decisions will be made solely on the basis of the suitability of the individual's skills and experience and ability to best do the job.

Specific Objectives Relating to Learner

- The selection of learners for recruitment shall be based on objective criteria related to the course requirements.
- The criteria used in selection shall be only those that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the course and they shall be applied consistently to all applicants, i.e. the competence standards.
- Applicants shall not be rejected on the basis of criteria, which are merely convenient as opposed to being essential for the course, as this may constitute indirect discrimination. Indirect discrimination occurs when selection criteria are used which are not strictly essential and which in practice exclude a greater proportion of one group than any other.
- Take account of all prospective learners and learning needs in the local community and design/adapt programmes to match them.
- Provide, as far as possible, the environmental conditions and the support needed for learners to achieve success in learning.
- Be accessible, informed, knowledgeable, helpful and welcoming to current and prospective learners.
- Provide information to prospective learners, enrolled learners and other agencies about the curriculum and support, which can be provided.

Monitoring

Sol Institute will regularly review the operation of its recruitment, promotion, training and development policies to ensure that no applicant or employee is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements, which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

All employees and job applicants will be asked to complete a section on the application form denoting their ethnic origin and any disabilities. Sol Institute guarantees that this information will be used only for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of its Equal Opportunities Policy.

Reasonable Adjustments for Disabilities

Employees who are disabled or become disabled in the course of their employment should advise the Human Resources Manager in writing. If applicable, they may also advise Sol Institute of any “reasonable adjustments” to employment or working conditions that would enhance their work performance. Careful consideration will be given to such written proposals where reasonable or practicable adjustments could be made. There may however be circumstances where it will not be possible for the Centre to accommodate the proposals.

Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment and selection processes are governed by the Human Resources Manager and are designed to achieve the best match between the individual’s knowledge, skills experience and character and the requirements of vacant positions, whilst recognising the need for flexibility in response to changing conditions.

Legal Contexts

The statutory position is set out in the following Acts.

- Sex Discrimination Act
- Race Relations Act
- Disability Discrimination Act
- The Human Rights Act
- The Employment Relations Act

Allegations of unjustified and unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender, race or disability may result in legal action. Employment tribunals are empowered to award damages to individuals who have been found to suffer unlawful discrimination. Everyone, regardless of his or her employment status, is protected against unfair discrimination.

Grievances

If at any time, you feel that you have been treated inappropriately or less favourably than others, you may use the Complaints Procedure for submitting a concern or appeal to the Human Resources Manager.

Harassment

It is important to remember that different people are prepared to accept different types of behaviour. A comment which one person finds acceptable may be offensive to someone else. In this regard, please be sensitive to the feelings of all colleagues. For the purpose of clarity, harassment means inappropriate conduct or conduct that is unwanted by the recipient. It may include a wide range of behaviour including the following examples, which are by no means exhaustive:

- unwanted physical contact / sexual advances
- subjecting someone to insults or ridicule because of their gender / sexual orientation / race / culture / disability / religion
- making jokes based on someone's sex / sexual orientation / race / culture / disability / religion
- basing decisions affecting an employee's career on their willingness or refusal to respond to the sexual advances of a colleague / student / service provider
- Making offensive comments, such as lewd, suggestive or over familiar comments regarding race / sexual orientation / religion or the display or circulation of sexually suggestive material

Sol Institute deplores all forms of harassment and seeks to ensure that the working environment is safe for employees. Sol Institute operates a zero tolerance policy regarding harassment of any kind in the work place. Such conduct or behaviour is not permitted or condoned and all employees must complain should they feel uncomfortable or threatened in any manner whatsoever.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as persistent actions, criticism or personal abuse, which humiliates, intimidates or undermines the status of an individual. Bullying can be the abuse of power by a senior staff person or the intimidation of a colleague by another employee and can take various forms including:

- verbal abuse
- intimidating or aggressive behaviour
- teasing or humiliation
- imposing unrealistic targets
- unfair and excessive criticism, possibly in front of colleagues
- isolating or openly ignoring someone
- physical abuse
- taking credit for the initiatives and achievements of others
- sending abusive or intimidating messages in writing or by email

As with harassment, bullying is defined largely by the impact of the behaviour on the recipient, not its intention. The policy covers the interaction of all Sol Institute employees with each other, learners and other third parties both inside and outside Sol Institute premises.

Procedures for Making a Complaint

Employees who feel that they have been harassed or bullied or placed in a position where they are likely to be harassed or bullied and who wish to make a formal complaint should raise their concerns in writing with the Human Resources Manager. The matter will be dealt with sensitively.

Initially, if you are a victim of harassment you should make it clear to the harasser, on an informal basis, that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask them to stop.

You should make your complaint in writing and where possible you should keep identifying notes of the incidents so that your complaint can include:

- the name of the alleged harasser
- the nature of the alleged harassment
- the dates and times when the alleged harassment occurred
- the names of any witnesses
- any action taken by you to stop the alleged harassment.