

COMPANY **POLICY**

Equality & Diversity Policy

Version: 3, 2023

The Magic of Learning

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Introduction to our Equality & Diversity Policy

Merlin Business Consultancy Ltd. (hereafter referred to as Merlin Consultancy) is committed to actively promoting equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce and to all our learners and suppliers. Eliminating unlawful discrimination is our starting point and not the end goal.

We aim for our behaviour, actions and application of our policy to be truly representative and supportive of all sections of society and our clients and for each individual learner and employee to feel respected and able to achieve their full potential. Through our promotion of this policy, we wish to present a role model for inclusive behaviour as Learning & Development professionals.

In providing goods and/or services and/or facilities Merlin Consultancy is also committed to eliminating any risk of unlawful discrimination of customers or the public as the starting point and to actively promoting inclusive practices.

Purpose of Our Policy

This policy's purpose is to:

1. Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment and associated with us, whether temporary, part-time or full-time
2. Not to unlawfully discriminate against the Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics of:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage or civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
3. Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. *This includes in:*
 - pay and benefits
 - terms and conditions of employment
 - dealing with grievances and discipline
 - dismissal
 - redundancy
 - leave for parents
 - requests for flexible working
 - selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

How this Policy Applies and Our Commitments

Merlin Consultancy commits to:

1. Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion as they are good practice and make business sense
2. Create a working and learning environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff and learners are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training all employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment and learning, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All employees and associates understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers, learners and the public.

3. Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

4. Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all employees, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
5. Make decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
6. Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
7. Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting actions, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Agreement to Follow this Policy

The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully promoted by senior management and has been co-created and agreed with all employees.

How We Promote our Equality & Diversity Policy

This policy is available to download from our website to ensure transparency for employers, learners and main providers we are supporting through our delivery. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and their principles are promoted internally through our workplace culture, on-going development practices and communications, and externally through our work with our clients and third parties.

How We Get Commitment to the Policy

It is a requirement of employment within Merlin Consultancy that colleagues should ensure that they have completed on-going development in this area on an annual basis. All policies within Merlin Consultancy are subject to peer review, with colleagues encouraged to contribute to ensuring we are compliant under the Equality Act 2010.

How We Train Employees in Implementing the Policy

Through **Future Learn**'s online learning platform, www.futurelearn.com.

All employees within the business are required to complete this on an annual basis by the anniversary of their previous certificate. Compliance of this is monitored by Dr Hilary Cooke, Director of Merlin Business Consultancy Ltd

How this policy will be reviewed annually

The policy will be reviewed on the date identified below, by the Development Manager, before being signed off and approved by Dr Hilary Cooke, Director of Merlin Business Consultancy Ltd.

| <i>Review date</i> | <i>Reviewed by</i> | <i>Signed off and approved by</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| 14 th February 2023 |  |  |
| <i>Latest date of next review</i> | Chris Howe | Hilary Cooke |
| 28 th January 2024 | Development Manager | Director |