

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Contents

Document Version Control	3
Policy Statement	4
Reasons for the Policy	4
Policy Objectives	4
Policy	4
Complaints	6
Responsibilities	6
Policy Review	8
Appendix A - The Equality Act 2010	9

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V 2	December 2025	Revision across the document to amend reference to EPAO to awarding organisation (AO).

Policy Statement

The OR Society actively promotes equality and diversity for all, including staff, Apprentices, Employers, Training Providers, contractors and any stakeholders who have direct or indirect contact with the OR Society by removing barriers and thereby widening access through a flexible and inclusive culture.

The aim of the OR Society is to create, maintain and promote an environment in which people treat each other with mutual respect, value each other's contributions and which is free of discrimination. This document is intended to give a common-sense approach to the rights and responsibilities of all members of the OR Society's awarding organisation (AO) community.

Whilst this policy relates to the AO function or the business, it aligns to the wider OR Society corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which is specific to all OR Society employees.

Reasons for the Policy

The policy will demonstrate OR Society's commitment to ensuring it implements and meets the equality duties for the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Appendix A). The work and activities of the company will always reflect this commitment.

The purpose of the policy is to establish clear guidance regarding all aspects of equality and diversity. Further, the policy will provide guidance on the key principles, structures, and monitoring of OR Society arrangements.

Policy Objectives

To ensure and confirm that OR Society fulfils its statutory obligations in relation to equality and diversity, embracing the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to effectively implement the Act and this policy.

To promote awareness of all aspects of equality and diversity across the AO function. This policy outlines our approach to fulfilling this commitment and to make it clear to all parties what they may expect from OR Society and equally what OR Society expects of them.

To ensure monitoring and review systems are in place to inform progress against all aspects of equality and diversity, and to report statistics which reflects OR Society activity.

Policy

We will champion and advance equality and diversity and take positive action to promote equality of opportunity. We will provide appropriate training and support

to AO staff to create a positive, inclusive ethos and investigate complaints and any incidents related to equality and diversity, taking prompt and appropriate action.

We will inform all staff, contractors, Apprentices, Employers and Training Providers of their duty in complying with this policy and that discrimination in any of the following forms will not be tolerated:

- Direct discrimination (including by association e.g., perception)
- Indirect Discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments

We will fulfil our specific duties by:

- Monitoring the assessment of Apprentices and the recruitment, and career progress of staff
- Making assessments accessible to Apprentices and adapt delivery and assessment methods to provide flexible opportunities where permitted by the Assessment Plan
- Provide access to impartial assessment guidance to Apprentices and ensure that appropriate systems are in place to provide support for Apprentices with additional learning needs
- Supporting Apprentices through the Independent Assessor and the EPA team. Specific support will be provided and/or barriers removed where reasonably practical to enable Apprentices with a difficulty/disability to access our services

We recognise that the potential for bias exists within the assessment process and will seek to minimise bias by:

- reviewing assessment materials for potential bias, perceived offensive content and stereotypes
- training staff to be aware of the potential for bias and the steps that can be taken to minimise bias
- training assessors and Internal Quality Assurers (IQA's) to acknowledge and identify the potential for bias
- ensuring IQA sampling strategies consider the potential for bias
- undertaking standardisation meetings with assessors and IQA's to review assessments and to ensure that assessment is purely based on evidence of competence
- monitoring equal opportunities data and assessment statistics against protected characteristics to identify trends

We will ensure that there are no features that could disadvantage any groups of apprentices that share a particular characteristic or barriers to entry other than

those directly related to the purpose of the assessment plan or qualification. The nature of any such features or barriers will be stated and the inclusion of the requirements that create the barrier justified in terms why they are required for the particular assessment component or qualification.

Individual Apprentices will have their support needs identified at registration and met through effective planning, reasonable adjustment and collaborative working with colleagues.

The quality of the promotion of equality and diversity in assessment will be assessed through our self-assessment arrangements, internal and external quality assurance and the moderation and standardisation of Assessment practice.

The Responsible Officer will provide a report to the Governing Board as part of self-assessment activities and where applicable will summarise the key actions that the AO has taken towards the achievement of equality objectives throughout the year and will be made available to all staff.

Complaints

Alleged acts of discrimination will be investigated in line with the arrangements set out in our Complaints Policy which is published on our website and in the knowledge base section of ACE360.

Responsibilities

All staff and contractors are responsible for:

- ensuring that they are aware of OR Society's statutory duties in relation to all Equality and Diversity legislation and that they work within the OR Society Equality and Diversity Policy
- carrying out all mandatory training and to engage actively in personal professional development related to equality and diversity
- treating everyone with respect, fairly and with understanding
- using appropriate language and behaviour
- reporting any concerns that they have for themselves and/or others

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- ensuring that the OR Society Business Plan includes a commitment to Equality and Diversity
- ensuring that equal opportunities training, features as part of the OR Society Business Plan
- ensuring that the quality improvement plan that is created following any self-assessment activity has equality and diversity at its core
- monitoring information provided by Equality and Diversity activity

The Responsible Officer is responsible for:

- ensuring that OR Society AO function meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and meets all its duties, including the general and specific duties
- taking the lead in creating a positive, inclusive ethos that challenges discriminatory behaviour on the part of managers, staff, contractors, Training Providers and Apprentices
- promoting Equality and Diversity within and externally to the OR Society
- ensuring that the Equality and Diversity Policy and its procedures are followed by all to whom it applies. In particular, ensuring that all the staff and contractors know and understand their responsibilities and receive support and training to enable their compliance with the policy
- following the relevant procedures and acting against staff, contractors, Apprentices, Employers and other stakeholders who discriminate for reasons relating to the protected characteristics

The AO team is responsible for:

- putting the policy and its strategies and procedures into practice
- ensuring Apprentice monitoring information is collected, analysed, and responded to where appropriate
- ensuring that data relating to the protected characteristics is recorded, stored, processed and readily available on SharePoint
- ensuring internal quality assurance procedures include sampling of protected characteristic groups
- ensuring that Apprentice assessments reflect OR Society's commitment to promote equality of opportunity
- reviewing assessment practice monitoring, which include criteria on equal opportunities where appropriate
- ensuring that OR Society's Self-Assessment and Quality improvement processes utilise data, record and make judgements of performance against Equality and Diversity criteria
- ensuring that all EPA information promotes equality of opportunity, are free from explicit or implicit unfair discrimination, challenge stereotypes and promote inclusion and diversity
- ensuring that marketing materials are provided for specific groups; alternative versions will be provided when required
- ensuring they challenge stereotyping and foster diversity through the decoration and displays within OR Society premises and on online platforms
- arrange for equality audits / health-checks / data monitoring of working practices to take place where necessary
- benchmark best practice

The Human Resources Team are responsible for:

- ensuring that they are aware of OR Society statutory duties in relation to Equality and Diversity legislation and employment
- ensuring that the procedures for the recruitment and promotion of staff enshrine the best practice at all times within equal opportunities
- ensuring recruitment policies and procedures actively support equality of opportunity
- monitoring and analysing employee data
- setting the targets on the recruitment and promotion of staff based upon the analysis of data monitoring information
- sourcing appropriate training and development to support the appreciation and understanding of equality and diversity across OR Society
- ensuring OR Society staff disciplinary procedures make provision for wilful or recurrent non-compliance with the Equality and Diversity Policy
- monitoring overall staff opportunities, performance, and satisfaction in relation to diversity profiles and for providing regular reports to the relevant OR Society committees and the Board
- checking that as part of their induction, all staff will be made aware that any discrimination of individuals or groups will be treated not only as a breach of company regulations but may also be a breach of civil or criminal law
- making sure that existing staff within the protected characteristics will be encouraged to compete for appointments and promotions
- ensuring that staff are invited to attend training offered by OR Society and that these training opportunities are monitored
- making certain that newly appointed staff attend an induction programme that incorporates equality and diversity awareness training within the first 3 months of service
- ensuring that every member of staff attends equality and diversity and protection from discrimination training every five years

Stakeholders, Contractors, Service Providers and Employers will adhere to the OR Society Equality and Diversity Policy, and any equality conditions in contracts or agreements.

Policy Review

Ofqual may require the OR Society to change this policy at any time to ensure compliance with its requirements.

This policy is reviewed as part of the OR Society's continuous improvement monitoring through its annual self-assessment arrangements. It may be reviewed earlier should any feedback or concern be brought to the attention of the OR Society to ensure it remains fit for purpose and the process and its outcomes are deliverable.

Appendix A - The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010, it has three main objectives:

- To simplify, streamline and harmonise the law
- To strengthen the law
- To support progress in promoting equality and achieving year on year improved outcomes

The Act contains six major changes to previous legislation:

- Identifies nine 'protected characteristics'
- Changes the definition of discrimination
- Places a new extended Public Sector Equality Duty on public bodies, with two new specific duties
- Harmonises and extends the role of positive action
- Restricts the use of health and disability-related questions during recruitment and selection
- Strengthens the power of employment tribunals

The protected characteristics are:

- Race (includes nationality and colour)
- Disability
- Sex
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion and/or belief (includes no belief)
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnerships