

Equality of Opportunities

This policy is underpinned by the understanding that staff employed by SFEU have a range of professional needs, abilities and aspirations which SFEU will take cognisance of in developing a supportive working environment (working practices) and in our role as a provider of educational services to the FE sector.

Inclusiveness

SFEU will strive to develop a working environment and working practices which are free of all forms of unfair discrimination where no one person will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of ethnic origin, colour, gender, disability, marital status, age, sex, sexual orientation or religion.

This is embedded within the values and principles of the organisation and in the policies that affect staff and is demonstrated in the Equality of Opportunity Statement that follows.

Inclusiveness Statement

SFEU aims to encourage and promote a culture of Inclusiveness, which ensures that the needs, abilities and aspirations of staff, customers and applicants for employment are recognised, understood and met within a supportive environment; and that they are encouraged to achieve their goals and to make real, measurable progress.

Equality of Opportunity

Pursuit of equality of opportunity means that all forms of unfair discrimination may be challenged and ensures that an environment free from harassment and unfair discrimination is created so that no-one person will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of ethnic origin, colour, gender, disability, marital status, age, sex, sexual orientation or religion.

Equality of Opportunity Statement

The Scottish Further Education Unit fully supports the principle of equality of opportunity in employment, education and training and opposes all forms of unlawful direct¹ and indirect² discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin, colour, gender, disability, marital status, age, sex, sexual orientation or religion and opposes all forms of discrimination on any grounds. To this end within the framework of the law, SFEU is committed to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the community in which we operate.

SFEU recognise the right of all individuals to have equal access to employment, career development opportunities and promotion. SFEU embodies these values within the organisation and the work it does with others – these standards are reflected in SFEU's Values and Principles.

Values and Principles

As a learning organisation, SFEU is committed to:

- Maintaining a customer focus and meeting customer requirements to the best of our ability.
- Working towards continuous improvement and achievement of high standards.

- Personal development with recognition of each individual's contribution to organisational success.
- Teamwork within the organisation and collaboration with others in sharing ideas and expertise.
- Delivering services efficiently and effectively with due regard to value for money.
- Developing on organisational culture that is inclusive and embraces diversity.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the policy is to make clear SFEU's commitment to:

- Embedding equality of opportunity in our working environment, working practices and planning processes.
- Ensuring all current and prospective staff and our professional community are aware of our commitment.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff, customers and applicants for employment.

Responsibility

Responsibility for achieving our aims with regard to equality of opportunity lies with all staff within SFEU but the implementation of this policy will be taken forward specifically by named members of the Senior Management Team and the HR Department.

Implementation

In order to achieve an environment that encourages Inclusiveness and Equality of Opportunity, SFEU will:

- Monitor equality of opportunity within the recruitment process.
- Ensure that criteria determined for recruitment are appropriate to purpose, are in the public domain and anticipate and address any barriers. To this end every possible step will be taken to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly and that decisions on recruitment, selection, training, promotion, and career management are based solely on objective and job related criteria.
- Provide disability and racial equality awareness training for key decision makers including managers, supervisory staff and those involved in personnel. General awareness-raising sessions will be provided for all other staff.
- Ensure all members of staff have access to a copy of the Equality of Opportunity Policy by including it in the staff handbook.
- Identify scope for implementing lawful positive action³ training and support, and ensure relevant action is taken, for example provide support for members of Unit staff who may become disabled.
- Anticipate, wherever possible, the needs of individuals and the support required to enable them to carry out their role within SFEU, provide a suitable development programme and incorporate identified needs into the planning cycle where appropriate.
- Review the methods developed and locations used for training and consultancy to ensure they embody our equality and inclusiveness principles.
- Promote inclusiveness throughout the FE Sector, in our working practices and our provision of services.
- Make reasonable adjustments where appropriate to include all groups in any activities undertaken by SFEU.

- Work with suitable bodies to resolve any equality of opportunity issues relating to workshops and events and services provided to the sector.
- Develop positive working relationships with other agencies, e.g. by sharing information with other agencies and organisations.
- Promote the policy publicly.
- Refer to the Equality Forward Unit for expert advice and information.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Each year a specific number of actions will be identified as part of developing and implementing this policy. The areas to be covered within the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy will be summarised in an Equality of Opportunities Action Plan, which can be obtained from the HR Department. These actions will form part of our annual operational plan and progress against plan will form part of our annual evaluation and therefore form the basis of the annual review of effectiveness of the policy.

Interests of Staff

Staff have an interest in the full and fair implementation of this policy and should they feel that this is not the case, they will have recourse through the grievance procedure to bring it to the attention of their Line Manager.

Interests of Customers and Third Parties

It is the policy of SFEU to deal with any complaints regarding discrimination quickly and efficiently avoiding the need for a written complaint wherever possible. However, should the matter require a written complaint the SFEU complaints procedure should be followed.

1) Direct Discrimination

Occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others on grounds of colour, race, religion, ethnic origin, nationality (including citizenship) gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status or disability. An example of direct discrimination in the context of assessment would be where candidates are given lower grades for their performance in assessments on the grounds of gender.

2) Indirect discrimination

Occurs when a rule or condition or requirement which applies equally to everyone has a disproportionately adverse effect on any person or persons on the grounds of colour, race, religion, ethnic origin, nationality (including citizenship), gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status or disability and there is no objective justification for the rule. An example of indirect discrimination in the context of assessment would be where assessment instruments are culturally biased and result in lower grades for a significant proportion of candidates from (particular) ethnic minorities.

3) Positive Action

It is lawful under both the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to address any special educational, training or welfare needs identified for a specific group.