

Equal opportunities and diversity policy

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Introduction

The FITS Foundation wholeheartedly supports the principle of equal opportunities and diversity, both in its employment practices and in its activities. As a self-funded not-for-profit organisation with a remit to provide strategic advice to the education sector, we recognise that our equal opportunities and diversity profile should provide an exemplar for others in the field. We must ensure that we are able to recruit, develop and retain a workforce that is able to deliver high standards of work and who are representative of both the local and national populations. We must ensure that we are free from both direct and indirect discrimination in our employment policies, procedures and practices. We strive to go beyond compliance and be at the forefront of embracing equality and diversity. We want to promote best practice and to be sensitive to the specific needs of our employees, stakeholders and their communities. Our equal opportunities and diversity policy is designed to meet these requirements.

The FITS Foundation will not tolerate discrimination against any employee or job applicant on the grounds of age, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender or gender reassignment, sexual orientation, disability (including HIV status), marital status, membership or non-membership of a Trade Union, Trade Union Activity, responsibility for dependents, political beliefs or part-time working. The FITS Foundation will aim to ensure quality of opportunity for all staff regardless of their role within the Organisation and to inform staff of their rights and responsibilities.

The FITS Foundation recognises that the workplace consists of a diverse population and that, for the Organisation to be truly inclusive, differences of culture, background, preferences and values are recognised, understood and valued allowing all talents to be harnessed rather than suppressed. It recognises people's differences and the benefits for business efficiency that can be gained from allowing them to use these creatively.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees who work under a contract of employment with The FITS Foundation.

This policy cannot be applied directly to contractors or third parties. However, all managers must make any contractor for whom they are responsible aware of The FITS Foundation's policy on equal opportunities and diversity. If a contractor is found to have breached the principles of this policy their contract with The FITS Foundation will be terminated.

Policy statement

Any behaviour or actions against the spirit and/or letter of the laws on which this policy, and its associated policies, is based will be considered as a serious disciplinary matter that could lead to dismissal.

Principles

This policy covers all aspects of employment from vacancy advertising, recruitment and selection, conditions of employment, training and development, promotion and appraisal through to termination of employment. It is supported by, and should be read in conjunction with, other FITS Foundation policies and procedures, such as:

- Recruitment and Selection
- Dignity at work (Harassment and Bullying)
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistle blowing)
- Disciplinary & Grievance
- Capability
- Absence Management

Aims and beliefs

The FITS Foundation's aim is to prevent and eliminate any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, responsibility for dependents, political beliefs, part time working, age, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender or gender reassignment, sexual orientation, HIV status, disability or marital status, membership or non-membership of a Trade Union, Trade Union Activity

The FITS Foundation believes that it is in its best interests of all to ensure that a full range of skills and experience available within the education and technology sector are considered when employment opportunities arise.

Investing in and promoting equality and diversity will help The FITS Foundation to improve staff retention rates, improve morale and improve services.

Duties and responsibilities (for equal opportunities and diversity)

Employer's responsibility

The FITS Foundation's responsibility as an employer is not just to comply with the letter and spirit of the law on equal opportunities (See Appendix 1) but to demonstrate that it is a fully inclusive employer.

The FITS Foundation has a statutory duty to implement and monitor equality schemes in respect of Disability, Race and Gender. These currently run from 2006 – 2010 and are available on The FITS Foundation's website and HR intranet page.

To embrace Best Practice in all of our policies and procedures and act to eliminate discriminatory practices whether direct or indirect

To value diversity in society and in its workforce enabling all employees to reach their full potential

To monitor the application of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and work towards eliminating any discrimination, either direct or indirect, which may be limiting the Organisation's ability to achieve its vision?

To be a fair and responsible employer.

To provide training in Equal Opportunities.

Managers' responsibility

Managers are responsible for the practical application of the policy and in particular to ensure that:

All staff and contractors under their control are aware of their responsibilities to adhere to and comply with the letter and spirit of this policy;

There is no discrimination in any of their decisions or behaviour

Proper records of employment decisions are maintained

Fair standards of employment practice are maintained

They engage actively in any measures that are introduced to ensure equal opportunity and diversity

Attend all training offered in equal opportunities

It is unlawful for any Manager, or anyone else in authority to instruct or induce others by pressure to discriminate.

Employees' responsibility

All members of The FITS Foundation's staff must recognise their responsibilities to adhere to and comply with the letter and spirit of this policy

To ensure that there is no discrimination in any of their decisions or behaviour

To inform managers if they suspect that discrimination is taking place or that policy is not being adhered to

To co-operate with management in the introduction of any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity and diversity

To co-operate with management in the elimination of any discriminatory practices which may be identified?

Human Resources

The Head of Human Resources will be responsible for:

Advising on and developing equal opportunity and diversity policy which mirrors best practice

Providing a detailed review of progress on the policy and action plan

Undertaking an annual equal pay audit and submitting the results, along with any recommendations for redress, to The FITS Foundation's Executive Committee

Providing equal opportunities and diversity training across The FITS Foundation to ensure that all staff and management are aware of their responsibilities

Collating and reporting on equal opportunities data covering recruitment, staff in post, promotion, training opportunities, grievance and disciplinary procedures, resignations, dismissals (including redundancies) and incidents of harassment

The Head of Human Resources will be responsible for the review and updating of this policy on an annual basis and will consult with PCS on any amendments.

The FITS Foundation's vision

The FITS Foundation will work towards achieving the following within its Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy:

- A workforce that is representative of the local and national community
- A balance of staff at all grades in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability
- All staff being encouraged to reach their full potential regardless of gender, ethnicity or disability
- A reward system that pays staff fairly and equitably
- Working with staff and PCS to promote equal opportunities and promote good employee relations
- Implementation of a flexible working policy to provide a range of working patterns for all employees to enable them to achieve a work life balance appropriate to their individual circumstances and responsibilities and which will enable the policy to be uniformly applied.
- Elimination of any conditions, procedures and individual behaviour that could lead to discrimination even where there is no intent to discriminate, with particular regard to:

- age, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender or gender reassignment, sexual orientation, disability (including HIV status), marital status, membership or non-membership of a Trade Union, Trade Union Activity, responsibility for dependents, political beliefs or part-time working.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring is an essential part of our equal opportunities and diversity policy. In order to ensure that The FITS Foundation's policy is effective and to enable action to be taken to prevent and eliminate any unlawful direct or indirect discrimination (and for no other reason), equal opportunities data will be collected, maintained and monitored in respect of age, gender, disability and ethnicity in relation to recruitment (including short listing and selection decisions), promotions, training, resignations, redundancies, grievance and disciplinary cases and complaints of harassment. This data will be kept both for all employees and those making applications to work at The FITS Foundation including those applying for contract and temporary positions.

This data will be evaluated on a quarterly basis and reported, with relevant recommendations, to The FITS Foundation's Executive Committee and PCS

The data from monitoring will be reviewed to assess the effectiveness of our policy. Where factual evidence shows the policy to be ineffective, the policy will be reviewed to ensure that equal opportunities are afforded to all applicants and staff.

Action plan

Our Action Plan has been designed to help us meet our vision for Equal Opportunities and Diversity. The Action Plan will be kept under review on an annual basis along with our Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes.

The FITS Foundation's action plan is to:

In general

Comply with all legislation dealing with discrimination and the promotion of equality, following codes of practice to support this legislation

Ensure that all employment policies, procedures, guidelines and other publications reflect and reinforce The FITS Foundation's commitment to equal opportunity and diversity.

Our Recruitment and Selection policy will include mandatory competency selection skills training; selection criteria will be constantly reviewed to ensure that it is justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds. In all cases more than one person will

carry out short listing and interviewing. We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies. Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the principles of this policy.

Specifically:

Action	Timeline
Review the way in which we collate and monitor Equal Opportunities data.	Annually
Provide Management Information relating to Equal Opportunities monitoring to the Senior Leadership Team quarterly	Ongoing
Review the results of Equal Opportunities Monitoring and take positive action where necessary and appropriate to address any under representation or any area which might disadvantage any particular group of people	Annually
Aim to maintain a balance of ethnicity with the organisation by recruiting solely on merit.	Ongoing
Aim to maintain a balance of disabled staff with the organisation by recruiting solely on merit.	Ongoing
Initiate forums in which to consult with disabled employees and employees who are representative of ethnic groups	Ongoing
Introduce a flexible working scheme which will provide a range of working patterns for all employees to enable them to achieve a work life balance appropriate to their individual circumstances and responsibilities and which will enable the policy to be uniformly applied	Introduces in September 2009
Ensure that all staff and managers are trained in and are fully cognisant of all equal opportunities legislation and issues and have access to advice and guidance at all times	Ongoing
Conduct an equal pay audit annually and take action to address any identified issues	Annually
Further review accessibility to the buildings and public areas to ensure that all buildings and facilities are fully accessible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate assistive technologies and make • appropriate adjustments, eg alternative lighting 	Part of our site selection procedures

<p>equipment,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sound absorbing partitions and materials • Provide a mobile induction loop system • Ensure that all public areas, meeting rooms and staff areas have adequate lighting 	
<p>Review all publications to ensure that all sections of the population are represented</p>	<p>Annually</p>

Evaluation of the policy and action plan

The policy and action plan will be evaluated on an annual basis. This review will involve consideration of progress made and priorities for future action plans.

Responding to feedback or complaints

The FITS Foundation is committed to respond quickly and constructively in relation to Equal Opportunities complaints.

We recognise that making complaints or expressing a concern regarding equality of opportunity or discrimination can be intimidating or uncomfortable. The FITS Foundation is committed to ensuring that any individual should feel able to come forward with a complaint and provides a range of procedures and support mechanisms to support individuals who have a concern.

We will take appropriate action to protect staff from discriminatory behaviour by any individual or groups. Allegations of discriminatory behaviour will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure:

Grievance Procedure

Disciplinary Procedure

Dignity at Work (Harassment) Procedure

Appendix 1

Legislation affecting equal opportunities

The FITS Foundation's Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy takes account of relevant Acts of Parliament. These include:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2002
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Equal Pay Act 1970

Other relevant legislation includes:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Flexible Working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations 2002
- Part-time workers (Prevention of less favourable treatment) Regulations 2000 and 2002
- The Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of less favourable treatment) Regulations 2002
- Maternity and Parental leave regulations 1999, 2001 and 2002
- Paternity and Adoption leave regulations 2002