



St Helens College

Equality and Diversity: Strategic Aims and Policy

Town Centre Campus, Water Street, St Helens WA10 1PP **Principal:** Dr Jette Burford M.B.A., Ph.D.

Technology Campus, Pocket Nook Street, St Helens WA9 1TT

T: 01744 733766 W: www.sthelens.ac.uk  [sthelenscollege](https://www.facebook.com/sthelenscollege)  [@sthelenscollege](https://twitter.com/sthelenscollege)



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 St Helens College has a long history of commitment to Equality and Diversity. The College strives to build a culture that values equality, diversity, openness, fairness and transparency for its staff and students. The College believes that by embracing equality and diversity we are providing a sound foundation on which to build a successful and vibrant college whose cultures and values are respected by both our students and the community as a whole. To this end the College is committed to produce, implement, review and monitor policies which promote equality and diversity for all those who study and work within the institution.
- 1.2 The terms Equality and Diversity are often used interchangeably. Equality is about fairness. It underpins and is at the heart of all that we are and all that we do. Equality goes well beyond just equal opportunities. To tackle traditional disadvantage and exclusion St Helens College aims to embed equality across all aspects of its work. This includes a commitment to having services that are of equal value to everyone, and recognise that this might mean different services to suit diverse needs. The word 'diversity' means a range of difference. We want to acknowledge and value this range of difference, whether in individuals, groups or in communities.
- 1.3 The College recognises that equality issues are complex and straddle more than just the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010. Life circumstances and opportunities also affect us and we need to take account of issues such as cultural and economic background, access to education, physical and social environment, and health in providing services to our staff and students.
- 1.4 This document describes how the College will continue to fulfil its statutory duties to promote equality and diversity as well as tackling and eliminating discrimination. The College will achieve this by placing the promotion of equality and diversity at the centre of its delivery.

2 Scope and purpose

- 2.1 The policy is applicable to all staff, students, communities, suppliers and contractors, whether permanent or temporary. The policy applies to all processes relating to employment and training and to any dealings with customers and students. Decisions relating to customers and communities will be based on business-related criteria only and any irrelevant information will not form part of the process
- 2.2 All employees and students have a personal responsibility to create and maintain an environment in which the dignity of individuals is respected, and are personally accountable for their behaviour. Each member of staff and all students should therefore seek to ensure that the Equal and Diversity Policy is applied actively on a day-to-day basis. Behaviour, actions or words that transgress the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the College's disciplinary policy for staff or students.
- 2.3 The purpose of this policy is to establish clear College guidance regarding equality and the overall commitment to Equality and Diversity.
- 2.4 This policy will be applied in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and guidance issued by ACAS and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission
- 2.5 The policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in the law, demographics and internal business requirements. Progress relating to the policy will be recorded annually and a full report will be presented to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Governors.

3 Policy

- 3.1 The College celebrates and values the diversity of its students and its staff. It believes that the College will benefit from employing a diverse workforce at all levels of responsibility, and across all areas of work and by encouraging a student population which is representative of the local community.
- 3.2 Through having a representative workforce and Governing Body the College seeks to provide role models across the curriculum and the various functions of the College. The College is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and students. This commitment applies to the operation and implementation of all its policies.
- 3.3 The College will treat all staff and students with respect and dignity, and seek to provide a positive environment free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
- 3.4 The College will seek not only to eliminate discrimination, but also to create an environment based on good relations between all groups which are represented within the College. The aim is to create a positive inclusive ethos with a shared commitment to challenging and preventing stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, to respecting diversity and difference, and to encouraging good relations between all members of its community. The College will not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour against its employees or students, either from other staff, students, contractors or members of the public.
- 3.5 The College will work towards the elimination of prejudice, harassment, bullying and discrimination, whether overt or covert, and will seek to ensure that all staff and students have equal access to the full range of College facilities.
- 3.6 The College believes that all forms of prejudice and discrimination are unacceptable. In recognition of the fact that they can take a variety of forms, depending on the group against whom they are directed, the College will adapt/develop policies embodying the issues specific to discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are defined in legislation, but can be summarised as:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation

3.7 The College commitment is to be a champion of equality and diversity and an example of best practice and embedding its commitment to equality in everything that it does. In particular our goals are to:

- comply with the law in promoting equality, embracing diversity and where appropriate go beyond the legal requirements
- enable students and staff with the opportunity to fulfil their potential in a supportive and safe environment
- promote equality of opportunity by reaching out and engaging groups of people who are not currently involved in learning,
- working with our stakeholders to contribute to economic success and help build a cohesive community.
- harness the talents of all and challenge any form of discrimination or harassment

3.8 We will judge our success by:

- measuring participation, retention and achievement to ensure that any inequality can be identified and resolved
- improving outcomes for people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.
- evaluating attitudes of staff on equality and diversity issues
- obtaining the views of students, staff and other stakeholders on how well we are doing
- monitoring progress in recruiting a diverse workforce and demonstrating best practice as an employer

4. Legal Duties

4.1 The College undertakes to fulfil all the legal duties put upon it by:

- The Equality Act 2010 and its associated Codes of Practice
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Employment Rights Act 1989
- The Criminal Justice Public Order Act 1994

This means there will be no discrimination against staff or students unless otherwise justified in law. The College undertakes to fulfil its duty to make reasonable adjustments to enable staff/students to do their work, and not to treat disabled staff/students less favourably than non-disabled staff/students.

4.2 The College accepts that there are inter-related legal requirements to the “public sector equality duty” which apply to it as a Further and Higher Education institution. The College, in carrying out its duties agrees to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) tackle prejudice, and
- (b) promote understanding.

4.3 The College will also comply with its Specific Duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are:-

(i) The College must publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the duty imposed by section 149(1) of the Act not later than 31st January of each year; and subsequently at intervals of not greater than one year beginning with the date of last publication.

(ii) This information will include, in particular, information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are—

(a) its employees;

(b) other persons affected by its policies and practices (ie students or prospective students).

(iii) The College will prepare and publish its objectives to enable it to achieve to the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (1) of section 149 of the Act.

The objectives must be published—

(a) not later than 6th April 2012; and

(b) subsequently at intervals of not greater than four years beginning with the date of last publication.

In compliance with the specific duty, these documents will be published in a way which is accessible to the public.

4.4 To ensure that its staff are fully aware of their legal obligations and responsibilities the College has purchased an on-line training package on Diversity in the Workplace which is compulsory for all staff to complete.

4.5 The College is committed to supporting the underlying principles of the Equality Act which are –

- To promote fairness and equality of opportunity;
- tackle disadvantage and discrimination; and;
- to modernise or strengthen our law to make it fit for the challenges that our society faces today and in the future.

5 Leadership

- 5.1 The College's Equality and Diversity Policy sets out the College approach to the governance and management of equality and diversity. Every employee is expected to assist the College in meeting its commitment to provide equal opportunities to staff and students. The Director of HR will provide the lead in advising students, staff and the Senior Leadership Team on matters concerning equality and diversity at the College.
- 5.2 The Governors agree and approve the Equality and Diversity Policy and the SES for the College. Governors also receive reports and statistical data which enable them to monitor equality actions and outcomes for employees and for students. The Principal, SLT and Governors endorse the commitment to equality and diversity and their lead is important in supporting staff and students embrace this commitment in everything we do.
- 5.3 To drive forward its commitment the College has appointed the Director of Human Resources to champion equality and diversity in Academic areas and in issues relating to employment. This does not remove the obligation on all staff to ensure that they are embedding equality and diversity in the daily work of their staff.
- 5.4 In addition to the responsibility of individual managers the College has set up an Equality and Diversity Committee whose role and remit is:
 - To advise SLT on the implementation of the College's Equality & Diversity policies;
 - To monitor and review the policy implementation and propose amendments and/or additions to the SLT, if necessary;
 - To prepare for the Corporation an annual Equality & Diversity action plan, and to report on progress made on the action plan;
 - To review any Impact assessments that have been undertaken.
 - To advise SLT on issues arising from and affected by the Equality & Diversity policies;
 - To report on external and internal developments which might affect the College's Equality & Diversity policies and action plans;
 - To annually review targets and produce a report on progress made with regard to Equality & Diversity

6. Equality as part of our Business Cycle

6.1 The College planning commences in February with strategic planning for the forthcoming academic year and a review of current performance. Priorities are identified, plans made and actions agreed to deliver learning.

6.2 We will:

- ensure equality is a mainstream element of all teaching and learning and that equality is embedded in everything we do. This will be reflected in our action plans.
- where provision of services are to be procured through tendering we will build action for equality into procurement arrangements, in line with the requirements of the European Union procurement directives.
- assess the impact on equality and diversity of implementing our policies and procedures
- collect evidence to monitor compliance, set improvement measures and report on progress in achieving these measures.

6.3 The College will publish an annual equality report on progress in relation to equality and diversity, in line with the requirements of our statutory duties, as well as providing ongoing reporting through the Equality and Diversity Committee to its SLT and Governors.

7 The College as an Education Provider

- 7.1 The College's mission is to deliver excellent education and skills for life and work enable our students to fulfill their creative ambitions and to progress to, and through successful careers
- 7.2 The College's values are to ensure all those who can benefit from studying, working or visiting the College are not disadvantaged due to a protected characteristic.

7.3 Admissions

The College will not discriminate against a person in relation to admission to the institution. This means that everything the College does in relation to deciding who is admitted to the institution will be non-discriminatory. This covers everything from course design and setting admission requirements to the information provided about the institution and the course application and admissions process.

All admissions information and application forms will be available in accessible formats to ensure that we comply with the reasonable adjustments duty to disabled people.

7.4 Curriculum Content

The College is not restricted in the range of issues, ideas and materials used across its syllabuses and will have the academic freedom to expose students to a range of thoughts and ideas.

7.5 Curriculum design

Although the actual content of courses is not subject to the discrimination provisions, the College recognises that it must ensure that its courses are taught in a way that will not subject students to discrimination and the way in which the curriculum is taught is crucial to challenging stereotypes and addressing inequality.

a. Assessments and examinations

These come in a variety of forms including the following:

- i. Written examinations.
- ii. Work-based assessment.
- iii. Critiques, orals and presentations.
- iv. Practicals and performances.
- v. Dissertations and coursework.

The College recognises that it is important for its staff to ensure that they do not discriminate against students with protected characteristics. Assuming uniformity in students' cultural, linguistic, and religious or lifestyle experiences could result in the College, for example, indirectly discriminating against students from particular racial groups. The College will make all reasonable attempts to try to avoid discriminating indirectly against students in the timing of examinations and assessments. For example

students may have difficulty attending examinations or assessments because of issues surrounding the side effects of medication, religious prayer times or festivals or caring responsibilities.

A competence standard is defined as an academic or other standard applied by the College for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability. It is not a provision, criterion or practice and there is therefore no duty on the College to make reasonable adjustments in relation to the application of a competence standard. However, the College recognises that its legal duties do apply to the process of demonstrating that a person meets the competence standard. In practical terms this means that the mark required to pass an exam would be a competence standard, so the College would not be subject to the duty to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled student. However, the College will consider reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities to sit an exam. Such adjustments may include providing an exam paper in enlarged text for a student with a visual impairment.

7.6 British Values

Colleges **have** been required to promote British values since 2014, and this will continue to be part of our response to the Prevent strategy.

British values include:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty & mutual respect
- Tolerance of different faiths & beliefs

The College will embrace British Values and embed them throughout the curriculum and within all activity within the College.

7.7 Educational trips

The College will ensure that educational trips which are arranged do not discriminate against any of its students and where required make reasonable adjustments to enable students with a range of disabilities to access them.

7.8 Qualifications

The College will avoid discriminating when awarding, renewing or extending qualifications to students, including any form of authorisation, approval or certification that it makes. For example if a student were to undergo gender reassignment during the course of their time at the College and notifies the College of their change of gender and change of name, the data that records and informs the student's progress and achievement will be amended accordingly

7.9 Work placements

The College will ensure that it does not discriminate in any of the arrangements that it makes with work placement providers and that where relevant they are made aware of the needs of their placement students with protected characteristics. This includes making sure that the work placement provider is aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments for those disabled students who require them. If the College is informed that discrimination has occurred, it will negotiate with the work placement provider to try and resolve the issue and if appropriate may need to find an alternative placement.

- 7.10 All material published by the College will seek to avoid the use of offensive and discriminatory language and images. Significant course publicity materials and exhibitions will include a statement outlining the College's commitment to Equality. Such marketing materials will be directed at encouraging the widest representation of cultural and social groups on the College's programmes. Equally, materials prepared by the College to deliver the curriculum will be free from racist, sexist, and other discriminatory assumptions, images and language, unless they are being studied as examples of such.
- 7.11 The College respects the wide diversity of the student body and will endeavour to ensure that systems and practices do not conflict with cultural and religious beliefs. Where there is potential for such conflict, staff are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from appropriate managers. Academic advice and guidance will be available to meet diverse needs and to ensure that students are aware of appropriate progression routes.
- 7.12 In recognising its duties to a diverse audience the College will provide facilities which are accessible in terms of physical structure (or reasonable adjustments for individuals affected by such accessibility issues); accessible information; and hours of service which reflect client usage. Facilities will be regularly audited and upgraded in the light of such considerations.
- 7.13 All facilities and locations will be monitored for the display of offensive literature. Where such material is found it will be removed.
- 7.14 In addition to support its students, the College will:
- Ensure our student policies are fit-for-purpose and review them regularly.
 - Act robustly to challenge and eliminate prejudice, bullying or harassment.
 - Support the Students' Union and other representative forums.
 - Regularly review our student monitoring figures and take action where appropriate.
 - Use a variety of different methods to attract and retain students from all equality backgrounds.
 - Comply with all equalities-related legislation.
 - Provide assistive technology and other services for students with particular needs.
 - Encourage open, honest discussion about issues which support students' educational attainment and a learning culture.
 - Continue to develop a student community that is reflective of the diversity mix of the area and beyond.

8 How we will deal with Complaints

- 8.1 It is the College's aim that most concerns or issues will be raised with and resolved in conjunction with tutors (for students) and line managers (for staff). In addition the College has a range of support options available to staff and students, including counselling. However, it is appreciated that resolution through these means is not always possible, or that the matter is of such a nature that it needs to be addressed more formally.
- 8.2 The College has therefore procedures in place to consider all complaints, through either informal or formal routes. These procedures apply to our equality obligations, including allegations of harassment or discrimination, or racism.
- 8.3 Where a complaint is made the College will look to address it within the terms of these procedures and will seek to provide a fair, proper and constructive response to complaints. Outcomes of complaints relating to equality and diversity will be considered in the review process for this scheme without breaching confidentiality.
- 8.4 If individuals, community organisations, trade unions or others are concerned that the College fails to comply with its statutory duties, we hope that in the first instance they will raise their concerns with the College directly via our complaints procedure.

9 External Relations

- 9.1 Visitors and representatives from organisations attending the College on any business will be expected to conduct themselves in a manner which matches the College Ethos on Equality and Diversity. External staff, consultants engaged by the College will be expected to adhere to the principles of equality of opportunity and, wherever possible, have adopted their own Equal Opportunities Policy
- 9.2 Organisations providing services for the College and employers participating in any work placement scheme will be made aware of the College's position on Equality and Diversity.
- 9.3 The College will use its influence to encourage wider understanding and acceptance of equal opportunities within the fields of both education and employment through its relationships with its external partners.
- 9.4 To further develop its policies the College will establish and maintain contact with external organisations which can contribute positively to the College's understanding of current law and good practice.

10 Publications Policy

We will ensure that this scheme and accompanying documentation are accessible by publishing them electronically in appropriate formats and making them available on request in large print, Braille and on tape.

11 Aims for the future

To ensure that this policy is delivered, the College has developed a main aim and overarching objectives:

Aim:

To ensure that the whole College community owns and actively implements the Equality and Diversity Policy within the College's strategic framework.

Objectives:

- To promote an ethos and image that positively reflects the College's commitment to equality and diversity.
- To ensure that all students and potential members of the College community are aware of, and comply with, the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- To ensure that all staff and potential staff are aware of, and comply with, the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- To ensure that the College's quality assurance framework including curriculum content, materials and delivery is underpinned by and reflective of the College's commitment to equality and diversity.
- To develop and maintain a culture in which staff and students work together so that bullying and harassment are deemed unacceptable.
- To provide an accessible physical environment which positively reflects the College's commitment to equality and diversity
- To provide learner services to meet individual learning needs.
- To provide the appropriate financial resources to effectively implement the College's Equality and Diversity Policy.

12 Monitoring, Reporting, Reviewing and Updating

12.1 Monitoring of the success of this policy will be through the College's Equality and Diversity Committee, who will report annually on progress to the SLT and to Governors through the appropriate college committees.

12.2 In monitoring the success the Committee will consider:

- The satisfaction levels of students from all protected characteristics, the College community, and its enthusiasm for diversity and respect for difference.
- The general level of complaints relating to any area of the College's operations and identify and evaluate any significant differences between identified groups with protected characteristics.
- How well students understand and support the institution's equality aims and values. The degree to which staff from all backgrounds, teaching and non-teaching are satisfied with how the College approaches equality.
- The extent to which governors know their responsibilities under the new legislation and how well the governing body represents the communities the College serves.

12.3 The College will review the policy every three years and update and report on progress against its objectives annually. Updating of policies will take account of changes in the law, government policy and College strategic goals, as well as new

information relating to equality and diversity.

12.4 Information in relation to the scheme will also be made available publicly, as required under statutory duties.



St Helens College

Author: John Hays, Director of HR

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