

Equality and Diversity Policy

1 Centre Mission Statement

1.1 'Realising student potential and achieving excellence'

2 Context

2.1 The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the Committee and members to the promotion of equality opportunities in Vista Training Solutions Ltd.

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All members of the organisation will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. Decisions on membership, selection for office, training or any other benefit will be made objectively, without unlawful discrimination, and based on aptitude and ability.

We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in all our activities will benefit the organisation. Our equal opportunities policy will help members to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the members will be utilised fully to maximise the effectiveness of the organisation.

We will provide a range of individual learning opportunities within further and higher education provision that:

- Ensure appropriate access
- Reflect the views of students
- Are inspiring, engaging and fun
- Incorporates on-line and blended learning and teaching
- Value and celebrate diversity and student success
- Are delivered in a safe learning and working environment.

The context of this policy supports the following:-

2.2 Safeguarding Statement

Vista recognises its responsibilities and duties under the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 requirements, which defines safeguarding as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Adult Safeguarding Statement

Vista believes that safeguarding students is our paramount concern and therefore safeguarding issues take priority in relation to any other policies and/or procedures.



Vista works in line with the Statement of Government Policy on Adult Safeguarding; Safeguarding Adults Principles to safeguard and prevent abuse of vulnerable adults.

- **Empowerment**- Presumption of person led decisions and informed consent.
- **Prevention**- It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality**- Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- **Protection**- Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnership**- Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- **Accountability**- Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

2.3 **H&S Statement**

VTS recognises its responsibilities and duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to provide a healthy and safe working and learning environment so far as is reasonably practicable. This duty extends to cover employees, students, contractors, Visitors and members of the public and covers all its related activities and undertakings.

2.4 **Equality & Diversity Statement**

VTS strives to promote beliefs and images that positively reflects its commitment to advancing equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity. Vista does not tolerate any prejudicial behaviour by any member of its community and has a zero-tolerance policy to bullying, harassment and victimisation.

Every step is taken to eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations among all social groups. Vista is committed to ensuring that it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly against individuals on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and maternity and pregnancy.

3 Our Commitment

3.1 Vista is committed to providing equal opportunities and celebrating diversity in all aspects of its work and to avoiding unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation to staff, students and customers.

Vista is committed to advancing equality of opportunity between people from different groups. This involves considering the need to:

- Equality means ensuring that everyone is treated equally i.e. that all students have the same right of access to resources. Consequently to ensure equality of opportunity, individuals / groups may be treated differently.
- Diversity is recognising that individuals and groups of people are different and that it is important to value and celebrate difference.
- Direct Discrimination is treating someone less favourably than he/she would treat others because of a protected characteristic.
 - [The individual does not need to possess the protected characteristic]
- Indirect Discrimination is where an employer/provider has a condition, rule, policy or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who have a protected characteristic.

[It can be justified if it is proportionate means of achieving legitimate reason]

- Associative Discrimination is discrimination directed against someone who associates with another person that possesses a protected characteristic.
- Perceptive Discrimination is direct discrimination against someone because they are thought (wrongly) to possess a protected characteristic.
- Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating an employee's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.
- Victimisation is where an individual is subjected to a detriment because they make, or are suspected of making, or supporting a complaint or grievance under the Equality Act 2010. [No protection if a complaint has been maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint].
- Third Party Discrimination protects employees who are harassed by clients, contractors of the employer/provider. An employer is liable if the conduct has occurred on at least two previous occasions, is aware it had taken place and had not taken reasonable steps to prevent it occurring.

The policy is intended to assist Vista to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

3.2 The Centre strives to ensure that the work and learning environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The Centre has a separate Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy for staff and students which deal with these issues.

3.2 Wherever possible the Centre will use Association of Centres (AoC) good practice guidelines.

4 Guiding Principles

4.1 The Centre has a set of core values which informs its culture and ethos. The core values are:

- Student centered
- Continuous improvement and high standards
- Trust and integrity
- Professionalism and responsibility
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Mutual understanding and support
- Innovative and enterprising.

- 4.2 VTS does not tolerate any prejudicial behaviour by any member of the Centre. The Centre is committed to ensuring that it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in the provision of goods, facilities or services to students, staff or customers on grounds of the Protected Characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Duty 2011.
- 4.3 Discrimination affects the ability of groups and individuals to take part on an equal basis with others, at work, in education and training, and in all aspects of everyday life. Such discrimination dismisses the opportunity available to these groups and goes against the principles of Vista's Mission.
- 4.4 Vista is totally opposed to any form of victimisation, bullying and discrimination and if any member of VTS community considers that they have been treated unfairly, they may have grounds for a complaint which will be dealt with through the complaints procedure. Any form of discrimination may be treated as a disciplinary offence resulting, if appropriate, in disciplinary action under the Centre's Disciplinary Procedure for staff and Learning and Behavior Procedure for students.
- 4.5 Vista strongly believes that the diversity of our local communities is one of our greatest strengths and our most valuable asset. VTS is fully committed to equality of opportunity and believes that all individuals have an equal right to develop and achieve their full potential. Our strategic aims reflect this, taking full account of the Government priorities for the UK economy and the skilled workforce needed to deliver future prosperity at local and regional level.
- 4.6 Equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination are fundamental rights and VTS has a legal and moral duty to exercise leadership in the promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity. VST will promote equality and diversity and challenge all forms of discrimination through our role as a service provider, community leader and local employer.
- 4.7 Our goal is to foster an environment that offers people inclusivity and in which they feel safe and secure, achieving an improvement in the quality of life for all who learn or work at VTS. Our commitment to equality and diversity is essential to the way VTS think and is therefore central to everything that we do. VTS takes a strategic approach to the delivery of services which is supported by our Performance Management Framework.
- 4.8 VTS firmly believe that our work, with local communities, partners and other agencies, will assist in pulling together a means to promote a culture that celebrates and welcomes diversity.
- 4.9 VTS will follow best practice in all of the equality areas and work towards:
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination
 - Eliminating bullying and harassment
 - Promoting equality of opportunity
 - Promoting good relations between different groups in the community
 - Celebrating and taking account of people's difference

5 Definition

- 5.1 Equality of opportunity means more than embracing differences such as gender/sex, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, maternity and pregnancy and gender reassignment (Protected Characteristics). It means ensuring that different people receive services, consultation and employment opportunities in a fair and equal way. This means recognising, accommodating and valuing diversity and promoting tolerance of those with different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs.

6 Scope

- 6.1 This policy covers all aspects of VTS business and relates to both staff and student activity including:

- Employment and Selection Procedures for staff
- Induction and probation for staff
- Staff Appraisal
- Staff Remuneration
- Staff Promotion and Training
- Staff Disciplinary and Grievances
- Recruitment, selection and enrolment of students
- Curriculum content and development
- Course delivery and assessment
- Teaching and learning materials and methods
- External contracts
- Self-Assessment
- Student Disciplinary.

- 6.2 This policy will set out how VTS will work towards the promotion of equality of opportunity in all of its service delivery. It sets out how VTS will ensure that discrimination is challenged and eliminated through compliance with legislation and positive action. This Policy will also set out the responsibilities of management, staff members and others, and actions that the organisation will take to ensure full compliance with this policy.

- 6.3 All of these documents outline Vista's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity. They recognise, accommodate and value diversity.

They are designed to address any inequalities identified within service delivery and eradicate any such inequality. There are numerous links between these policies, strategy and plans and this Equality and Diversity Policy as they form the basis of the equality framework enabling us to deliver our commitment to equality and diversity with an emphasis on the elimination of any forms of harassment or unlawful discrimination.

7 Policy

7.1 Vista's Equality and Diversity Strategy, Equality and Diversity Action Plan and Inclusion Report translates this policy into key strategic objectives:

- To actively promote an ethos and culture that advances educational and social inclusion and equality of opportunity
- To ensure that all external partnership and employer engagement provision complies with the legislation and curriculum delivery to close the equality gap.
- To take proactive steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation and to promote good relations among all social groups.
- To ensure that VTS Quality Assurance Framework is underpinned by and reflects the Centre's commitment to equality and diversity thereby promoting inclusion.
- To ensure there is effective monitoring of all aspects of the student journey to close the equality gap and actively promote equality of opportunity.
- To ensure there is effective monitoring in all aspects of Vista staff reporting mechanisms to address any inequality and actively promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination.

7.2 The Strategic Equality and Diversity Objectives are owned at a strategic level by members of the management, updated yearly and published on the VTS website.

7.3 Vista as a Service Provider

Vista will:

- Ensure that all our services are accessible
- Provide clear, meaningful information about VTS services in ways that are fully accessible and meet the community's diverse needs
- Monitor take-up and evaluate services to ensure that they do not discriminate or exclude
- Ensure our buildings are as accessible as possible by making all necessary reasonable adjustments
- Ensure equal access to the Centre's Complaints Procedure
- Ensure that all publicity materials present appropriate, positive and inclusive
- Encourage (and, where legally possible, require) others to adopt this policy and, associated action plans including those who provide goods and services on behalf of Vista.

8 Legal Responsibilities

8.1 VTS operates within the legislative framework of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Duty 2011 and other relevant legislation i.e. The EU Framework for Equal Treatment in Employment Directive 2000 and The Work and Families Act 2006.

8.2 Equality Act 2010

In keeping with VTS commitment to equality and diversity for all, and the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, VTS will ensure that no individual or group is discriminated against, or receives less favourable treatment and thereby provide protection to the following groups:

- Age
- Gender Reassignment
- Disability
- Sex
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Marriage and Civil Partnership.

8.3 The Equality Act 2010 has general and specific duties. The General Duties requires public authorities to have due regards for the need to:

- ☐ Take proactive steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to the protected characteristics
- ☐ Promote positive steps to promote good relations for and between all social groups
- ☐ Advance equality of opportunity.

The Specific Duties Regulation 2011 obliges the Centre to:

- ☐ Publish information to demonstrate the compliance with Equality Duty at least annually
- ☐ Set equality objectives at least every four years.

8.4 Due Regard

In line with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Duty 2011 VTS supports good decision making by encouraging staff to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that our policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet the needs of different people. In line with legislation VTS has to demonstrate 'due regard' in relation to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- Foster good relations.

This involves considering the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Meet the needs of people with particular protected characteristics
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low
- Foster good relations between people from different groups - this involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups.

Due regard comprises two linked elements, proportionality and relevance. To demonstrate due regard as employers, education and service providers, VTS needs to consider the relevance of the three aims of the equality duty when:

- Developing, evaluating and reviewing policies (including, for example, those relating to recruitment and selection)
- Designing, delivering and evaluating services, including education provisions
- Commissioning and procuring services from others.

To consider proportionality, the Centre should determine:

- ☐ The relevance of the policy to protected groups
- ☐ The relevance of the policy to the public sector equality duty
- ☐ Any concern previously raised about policy or practice
- ☐ Any information indicating an adverse impact on a protected group.

8.5 The Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015)

Place a duty on specified authorities including further and higher education to have due regards to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

The act puts the existing support programme for people at risk of radicalisation, on a statutory basis.

The Prevent Duty is not about discouraging students or staff from having political or religious views and concerns but rather it is about supporting them to express them in non-extremist ways.

9 Responsibility

- 9.1 Under legislation and this Policy all members of staff and service users have a responsibility to listen to what others say and respect different points of view. All staff must also report all incidents of bullying and harassment and discrimination.
- 9.2 The overall responsibility for the development of a culture and policies to actively promote equality and diversity tackling discrimination and narrow the achievement gap is vested in the Governing Body. The members of the Governing Body are responsible for approving the Centre's Annual Equality and Diversity Report and thereby monitor the implementation of this policy.
- 9.3 The Director and Management Team are responsible for the strategic ownership and delivery of this Policy and associated equality schemes.
- 9.4 Managers have responsibility for the day-to-day operation of this Policy and associated equality targets. They are also responsible for ensuring that all staff is aware of their legal responsibilities under equal opportunity legislation, reviewing and monitoring the operation of this Policy and associated equality objectives.
- 9.5 Line managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff understand their responsibilities in the context of equality and diversity and that they report all incidents of harassment and discrimination. They are also responsible for ensuring that all staff has equality of access and resources.
- 9.6 The Equality and Diversity Committee has the responsibility to approve and monitor this policy and the Strategic Equality and Diversity Action Plan.
- 9.7 All members of staff are responsible for demonstrating that the equality of opportunity is promoted. They should ensure an ongoing dialogue about equality of opportunity issues and priorities take place with students, partners and organisations, contractors and other service users.

10 Monitoring, Review and Dissemination

- 10.1 This Equality and Diversity Policy will be published on the website. VTS will also provide paper copies and other alternate formats upon request.
- 10.2 VTS's Equality and Diversity Committee will meet at least once every six weeks to review the Centre's progress on promoting and achieving race, disability, gender and age equality. Progress will also be monitored and managed across the organisation through our performance management framework.
- 10.3 VTS will implement the Equality and Diversity Policy through its Strategic Equality and Diversity Action Plan and monitor its effectiveness against specific equality objectives, performance targets.
- 10.4 The Senior Manager with responsibility for the implementation of an identified strategic objective will provide a termly progress report to the Equality and Diversity Committee.
- 10.6 The Equality and Diversity Statements, Policy and Procedures will be reviewed and approved yearly by the Equality and Diversity Committee.
- 10.7 VTS will collect equality and diversity data at all stages of a student's and employee's career and where appropriate establish equality objectives for improvement.

11 9 Protected Characteristics

Vista Training Solutions is committed to ensuring equal opportunity for all and that all staff and students, regardless of their protected characteristics are able to achieve their full potential.

(1) Age equality

Age diversity is promoted and valued through:

- Recognizing the benefits of a mixed-age workforce and student community
- Challenging age stereotypes

(2) Disability equality

The abilities of disabled people are valued through:

- Encouraging staff and students to disclose a disability
- Making reasonable adjustments to support staff and students to achieve their full potential
- Challenging stereotypes about disabled people

(3) Gender equality/Gender Reassignment

Students are fully represented at all levels within Vista through:

- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Supporting staff and students in balancing work and home life
- Ensure people who plan to start, are undergoing or have completed gender reassignment are

protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment

- Respecting different gender identities and lifestyles

(4) Marriage and Civil Partnership

This is fully recognized by Vista through:

- Recognizing the requirement to have due regard to the need to ensure that individuals are not unlawfully discriminated against.
- Challenging Stereotypes
- Respecting different partnerships/marriages
- Supporting staff and students through the process

(5) Pregnancy and Maternity

This is fully recognized by Vista through:

- Ensuring that staff or students sharing this protected characteristic are not discriminated against and are encouraged to engage positively in the learning environment:
- Vista has made provision to ensure that maternity leave entitlement applies equally to both academic and non-academic members of staff.
- Challenging Stereotypes
- Ensuring that appropriate time off is available
- Respecting students and staff

(6) Race equality

Racial and cultural diversity is represented at all levels within Vista through:

- Challenging racial and cultural stereotypes
- Understand, value and respect different racial and cultural backgrounds
- Embedding equality in our education and training programmes

(7) Religion/Belief

Religion or belief equality Students and staff are treated equally irrespective of their religious belief and practice or political opinions by:

- Respecting a persons' freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution.
- Provide an environment where students and staff can raise issues and debate differences

(8) Sex/Gender

We seek to enhance the role of the general statement in ensuring that all staff and students in Vista are treated equally:

- Irrespective of their gender students and staff will be treated equally
- Challenge Stereotypes
- Respecting different genders
- Ensuring that there is a safe environment for all genders within the centre.

(9) Sexual orientation

Promote sexuality and gender identity equality and take positive action to:

- Challenge gender identity discrimination
- Promotion of equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff and learners
- Ensure people who plan to start, are undergoing or have completed gender reassignment are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment
- Respecting different gender identities and lifestyles

