



Student Equal Opportunities Policy

LOCAL POLICY

Version 5

Scope of Policy:	All Students
Policy Owner:	Head of Learner Success
Date Approved:	24/10/2021
Approved By:	Strategic Leadership Team
Status:	Current
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Further Information

For further information about the content of this policy please contact:

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Belfast
BT3 9DT

Policy Compliance details:-

Compliance with Equality Legislation.

PLEASE NOTE: Policies must be equality screened before being submitted to SLT and Trade Unions:-

Equality Screening Date:	25/08/2009
Equality Screening Outcome:	Screened Out
Sector or Local Screening:	Local Screening
Consultation Date (if applicable):	Not Applicable
Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Date (if applicable):	Not Applicable
EQIA Key Outcomes:	Not Applicable

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Document History

Version Number	Author	Reason for Change	Date
1.0	Learner Success	Reviewed by Head of Student Support and Equality and Good Relations Officer. The following changes were made: Page 7 – Harassment, Grievance and Discipline – remove reference to my Belfast Met Site	15/11/2016
2.0	Learner Success	Reviewed by Corporate Compliance Officer and Director of Transition. The following changes were made. Page 5 – Commitment - removal of the line <i>“Selection for a course/learning programme and for progression in the course/learning programme will be on the basis of ability, qualifications and aptitude.”</i> Page 7 –Implementation – Line to be added <i>“The Governing Body of Belfast Metropolitan College will be responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented throughout the College.”</i>	08/12/2016
3.0	Learner Success	Policy transferred to new format	04/02/2019
4.0	Learner Success	Review schedule extended to 3 years Section 6 updated to include: Any student who believes that he or she has been the subject of discrimination or harassment should contact the Student Wellbeing Team for support. Students who break the student code of conduct are subject to investigation and where appropriate student disciplinary sanction.	September 2021
5.0	Learner Success	Section 6 re-named. Paragraph relating to Student Code of Conduct (see V4 above) deleted to avoid repetition.	September 2024

Table setting out the version history of this Policy - what changes were made, when and by whom

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Distribution

This document has been distributed as follows:

Name	Date
Trade Union	N/A
Senior Leadership Team	23/10/17; 25/10/21
Committee	N/A
Governing Body	N/A
Issued to Corporate Development for publication	February 2019; November 2021; September 2024
Communicated to students	Annually

Table setting out policy details

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1. Aim

The aim of this policy is to:-

- communicate Belfast Metropolitan College's commitment to Equal Opportunities and good relations;
- promote respect, equality and diversity within the College;
- provide a mechanism for dealing with unfair or discriminatory treatment of students;
- provide a mechanism for dealing with a breach of this policy.

2. Introduction

The primary purpose of Belfast Metropolitan College is to extend opportunities for education and training to all members of the community. Every student will have equal opportunity to enter a course/learning programme and to progress on that course/learning programme. Every student has the right to respect for their own background and culture but equally has a duty to respect that of others.

3. Commitment

To this end, the College is committed to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to the promotion of equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, religious belief, sexual orientation, political opinion or whether or not you have a disability or dependants. In our policies and practices the College will seek to enhance the self-esteem of all those it serves and to provide a learning environment in which each individual is treated with respect and is encouraged to fulfil his or her potential.

We will seek to promote equality of opportunity across all our functions namely: -

- Access and recruitment
- Admissions and retention
- Assessments and progression
- Provision of student services and related facilities
- Teaching, learning, examining, curriculum development and quality assurance
- Community links and partnerships

In selection or progression there will be no direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on any of the grounds stated above.

The commitment to equality of opportunity is a fundamental policy that pervades all College activities and is endorsed by the Governing Body. All members of the College community are expected to uphold the policy and to ensure that their actions embody that commitment.

Every student will be treated with respect and dignity and every student will be expected to treat staff and other members of the College community with respect and dignity.

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4. General Principles

The College seeks to prevent direct and indirect, and overt and covert, discrimination and to instil equality, fairness and good relations into the ethos of the organisation. We therefore require staff, students and visitors to behave in a non-discriminatory manner and to support, implement and develop institutional practices and procedures that promote and reinforce equality of opportunity and treatment for all.

The right of every student to equality of opportunity is embodied in our Equality Scheme and Equal Opportunities Policies and is fundamental to all aspects of operation of the College.

Consequently, direct discrimination on the grounds of age, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, religious belief, political opinion, sexual orientation and whether or not you have a disability or dependants, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated by any member of the College community. The College will take appropriate disciplinary action where individuals discriminate, incite others to discriminate, or disrespect others in this way by language or action.

Equally, the College will not accept indirect discrimination, in which an action, direction or procedure leads to unfair treatment, exclusion or disadvantage in respect of a particular group, even though the action, direction or procedure itself is not intended to have this effect. Our aim is to prevent this from happening by monitoring our policies, training staff and taking action when appropriate. Indirect discrimination may also result in disciplinary action.

Students and staff are required to make themselves familiar with, and to adhere to, the policies in place in the College which promote equality of opportunity and good relations as well as adhering to the guiding principles of equality of opportunity and good relations.

All staff and students must be treated with respect and dignity irrespective of their age, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, religious belief, sexual orientation and whether or not they have a disability or dependants.

Students are expected to behave in a way which respects and appreciates the diversity of the College community and the culture of others within that community.

5. Recruitment

The College will endeavour to reach the widest possible potential student market. All material advertising courses will contain a statement promoting equal opportunities and will not be confined to particular geographical areas or media publication which may exclude particular groups.

Eligibility criteria for each course/learning programme will be clearly and publicly stated and adhered to for the purposes of selection, and applicants may ask for the reasons why their application was unsuccessful.

6. Raising Concerns & Means of Redress

Any student who believes that he or she has been the subject of discrimination or harassment should contact the Student Wellbeing Team for support.

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Alternatively, any student who believes the College may have breached the commitments in its Equality Scheme may lodge a complaint under the Equality Scheme Complaints Policy.

The College requires students to behave in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. Any actions not in keeping with this may be investigated. All investigations will be fair and if disciplinary measures are required under the Disciplinary Policy, these too will be applied fairly and in a consistent manner.

7. Monitoring

In keeping with our obligation under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and as stated in our Equality Scheme, the College will monitor the effectiveness of this Policy and all other relevant policies and practices on students.

To monitor effectively, the College must therefore ask students for the following relevant personal information, which will be stored securely and treated in the strictest confidence:

- Age or date of birth;
- Gender;
- Ethnicity;
- Nationality;
- Disability
- Dependency
- Sexual orientation
- Political opinion
- Religious belief
- Marital status

Students are not required to provide this information if they have concerns about how it will be handled. However, we would greatly appreciate co-operation with this to ensure that the College is neither directly nor indirectly discriminating in how it delivers its services.

The information received will not be used to make a decision about a student's suitability for a particular course of study, nor will it be used by a tutor at any stage to influence a student's assessment or results. It will only be used for equality monitoring purposes. This normally only requires composite data in which individuals will not be identifiable.

We would therefore appreciate the full co-operation of students to help to facilitate the collection of this important monitoring information.

Monitoring information will also help to influence our business decisions and therefore form part of our quality assurance process.

8. Implementation

The Governing Body of Belfast Metropolitan College is responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented throughout the College. The policy must be communicated to all students and staff who have the responsibility of ensuring that this happens.

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All line managers in the College are responsible for ensuring that all their members of staff are aware of the policy on equal opportunity for prospective students and students, and that the policy is implemented.

All staff employed in the College have a responsibility to accept personal involvement in the application of the Equal Opportunities Policy and to take action when they witness behaviour or language which is not in keeping with this policy.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed within every three years.

10. Complaints

It is hoped that we will be able to resolve any complaint through the complaints procedure. If the customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome they have the right to raise the matter with the Northern Ireland Ombudsman's Office (in his/her role as Commissioner for Complaints).

The customer can complain to the Ombudsman; however, the Ombudsman will normally only consider a complaint after it has been managed in accordance with the College's Customer Complaints Policy.

Contact details for the Ombudsman are:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

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