

# Equal Opportunities Policy

Last Updated March 2024

Zen Educate is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among its workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and for each employee, contractor or education professional (supply staff and tutors) receiving assignments in schools through Zen Educate to feel respected and able to give their best.

Zen Educate is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.

The policy's purpose is to:

- provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time, and in the work we offer education professionals;
- clearly state our commitment to a zero tolerance approach to discrimination because of any protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation as provided for in the Equality Act 2010;
- state our commitment to training our staff in equality and diversity;
- set out the action that Zen Educate will take should there be any breach of this policy; and
- provide details of how any allegations of discrimination should be reported.

Zen Educate commits to:

- Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff and education professionals are recognised and valued.
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.
- Take prompt action against anyone who unlawfully discriminates against or harasses other people, including current and former staff, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts, and on work-related trips or events including social events).

## **Discrimination**

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

- (a) Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay.
- (b) Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular protected characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.
- (c) Harassment: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them
- (d) Victimisation: retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment. This includes where someone mistakenly believes that the person victimised has done so.
- (e) Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and

failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's disciplinary procedures when made by staff, or under our complaints policy when made by an education professional, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

If you believe that you have suffered harassment, bullying or discrimination, or witnessed it happening to someone else in the workplace, you can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

## **Training and Recruitment**

- Zen Educate will ensure opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Recruitment, promotion, and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. When recruiting or promoting, we will aim to take steps to improve the diversity of our workforce and provide equality of opportunity. Shortlisting and interviewing should be done by more than one person where possible. Our recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are objectively assessed on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.
- We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the HR Department or UK Visas and Immigration.

We will review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.

Monitoring how the Equal Opportunities Policy is working in practice, reviewing it annually, and taking action to address any issues.

This policy is fully supported by the Leadership team at Zen Educate.