

# Fair Access and Equality of Opportunity Policy

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**Approved externally by SFJ  
Awards' Quality & Standards  
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# 1 Purpose

This policy sets out SFJ Awards' commitment to ensuring in the development, delivery and award of our qualifications, we adhere to the diversity and equality legislation and principles in our responsibilities as a regulated awarding organisation, and what we expect of our centres.

*Please Note: this policy does not cover your centre's own HR Policies, or SFJ Awards' own employment procedures; which are covered by the Skills for Health Ltd's Equal Opportunities Policy.*

All SFJ Awards approved centres must have appropriate policies in place for approval to be granted. By accepting SFJ Awards' Approved Centre Contract, the centre confirms they will adhere to the policies they have in place.

This policy is based on the knowledge that a centre's own policies and procedures have met the centre approval criteria.

Centres are required to have in place a policy to ensure that discrimination does not occur either directly, indirectly or as a result of pressure from others, and there should be arrangements in place to monitor its application and effectiveness.

This policy outlines our approach for ensuring that SFJ Awards' qualifications are accessible and do not discriminate against anyone.

SFJ Awards recognises that a commitment is not a point in time statement but a commitment to a long term and continual review of policies, practice and performance which reflects a set of underlying values which inform and guide the working practices of the organisation.

SFJ Awards fully supports the principle of equal opportunities and opposes all unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of:

- age
- ability
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marital/civil partnership status
- domestic circumstances
- pregnancy and maternity
- racial group
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- colour
- culture
- social background
- employment status
- or any other grounds or status

# 2 Definition

The **Equality Act 2010** brings together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. Combined, they make up a new Act that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. It protects individuals from various forms of discrimination and harassment.

**Direct discrimination** - when you are treated less favourably than another person because of your characteristic or disability.

**Indirect discrimination** - when a rule, policy or practice is applied to everyone, but it has a particular disadvantage to people with a characteristic or disability.

**Protected characteristics** - characteristics that are protected by the law.

It is unlawful to discriminate (directly or indirectly) because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "**protected characteristics**".

### **3 Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Learners:**

- Are familiar with your centre's fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies.

#### **Centre Tutors, Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers:**

- Are familiar with and adhere to this policy and the centre's own fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies during the development, delivery, assessment and award of SFJ Awards' qualifications.
- Ensure that all processes concerned with the development, delivery, assessment and award of SFJ Awards qualifications are carried out in a fair and objective manner.

#### **Heads of Centre:**

- Ensure the centre has fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies in place to meet SFJ Awards' centre approval requirements.
- Ensure centre staff and learners are aware of this policy and the centre's fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies.
- Monitor centre's arrangements for fair access, equality and diversity.

#### **External Quality Assurers (EQAs):**

- Ensure SFJ Awards approved centres have in place fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies and practices.
- Ensure that SFJ Awards approved centres have in place monitoring arrangements for fair access, equality and diversity.
- Identify issues relating to fair access, equality and diversity, particularly in the application of assessment.

#### **Qualifications and Product Development Manager:**

- Conduct Equality Impact Assessments on qualifications and materials developed by the Qualifications Development Team.
- Ensure language used in materials is clear, free from bias and appropriate to the target group.
- Conduct Equality Impact Assessments on assessment methods during their development.

#### **The Awarding Organisation (Responsible Officer):**

- Collect and monitor available data to detect accidental bias over time.

## 4 Qualification Development, Assessment and Quality Assurance

SFJ Awards complies with the Equality Act 2010 and will:

- Apply the fair access by design guidelines, maintained by Ofqual, in their work to ensure qualifications are designed to be as accessible as possible.
- Not discriminate, victimise, or harass any individual or groups identified within the Equality Law.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and look for ways of improving it.
- Make this policy freely available to our staff, external contractors and Qualification Users, and publicise it clearly on SFJ Awards' website.
- Conduct Equality Impact Assessments on qualifications and assessment methods during development.
- Produce materials that comply with Equality Law.
- Use language in our materials that is clear, free from bias and appropriate to the target group.
- Arrange development events for our staff and external contractors involved in the development and quality assurance of our qualifications.
- Collect and monitor available data relating to candidate achievement to detect accidental bias in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Ensure our approved centres have their own fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies.
- Monitor approved centre's adherence to their fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies.
- Apply sanctions where centres do not conform to Equality Law.

### Qualification Development

SFJ Awards will ensure that there are no barriers or features in their qualifications or units that could disadvantage any groups of learners that share a particular characteristic.

SFJ Awards ensures that at the time of developing a qualification, attention is paid to the need to ensure access to learning and assessment by all learners through:

- Removing bias in content.
- Ensuring assessment methods employed do not put up unnecessary barriers to specific groups of learners.
- Ensuring new qualifications are scrutinised to ensure equality of opportunity whilst ensuring that the integrity of the qualification has not been compromised.
- Ensuring assessment materials are reviewed to ensure there is no unnecessary bias or barriers.

### Assessment

We expect our approved centres to enable learners to have equal access to training and assessment for qualifications and units and ensure that all processes concerned with assessment are carried out in a fair and objective manner. Assessment must be undertaken without discrimination.

## Quality Assurance

We ensure through our quality assurance processes attention is paid to the need to ensure access to learning and assessment by all learners through:

- Monitoring assessment materials.
- Offering special arrangements to learners, who may not be able to fully demonstrate their abilities in prescribed assessment situations, provided that this does not unreasonably affect the standards and outcome of the assessment.
- Monitoring all complaints, enquiries and appeals that may suggest discriminatory practice.

## 5 Contacting SFJ Awards

If you want to discuss an equality issue, you should contact SFJ Awards using the contact details below:

The Awarding Organisation Manager  
SFJ Awards  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Unit C Meadowcourt Business Park  
4 Hayland Street  
Sheffield  
S9 1BY

Telephone: 01142 841970

Email [info@sfjawards.com](mailto:info@sfjawards.com)

We will respond within 5 working days of receipt.

We will work with parties to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted in access to our products and services and that unfair or unlawful discrimination, whether direct or indirect is eliminated.

## 6 Useful Contacts and Links

A copy of the Equality Act 2010 can be found on the HMSO website ([www.hmso.gov.uk](http://www.hmso.gov.uk))

Advice on equality can be found on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website ([www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)) or in Northern Ireland, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland ([www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org))

## 7 Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Quality and Assessment Manager on a regular basis as part of SFJ Awards' self-evaluation arrangements and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance from the Qualifications Regulators.

Our review of the policy will ensure that SFJ Awards procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied appropriately and equitably.

Policies and formal amendments to policies are approved at the next meeting by the Quality & Standards Committee.

If you have any queries about the content of the policy or you wish to give feedback then please contact SFJ Awards Tel: 01142 841970 or email [info@sfjawards.com](mailto:info@sfjawards.com)

## 8 Location of the Policy

You can download copies of the policy from our website: [www.sfjawards.com/fairaccess](http://www.sfjawards.com/fairaccess)