



Fair Access and Equality of Opportunity Policy



**The
Workforce
Development
Trust**



Revisions and Amendment Register

Date of Issue	Page No	Revision	Version
May 2024		New updated issue following policy review	24.1
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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 and End-Point Assessment organisation, and what we expect of our centres and training providers.

Please Note: this policy does not cover your centre's own HR Policies, or SFJ Awards' own employment procedures, which are covered by the Workforce Development Trust's Equality and Diversity Policy.

All SFJ Awards approved centres and training providers must have appropriate policies. For regulated qualifications, acceptance of the SFJ Awards' Approved Centre Contract, is confirmation that 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.

This policy outlines our approach for ensuring that SFJ Awards' qualifications and End-Point Assessments 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 – these are characteristics that are protected by the law. There must not be any barriers to achieving a qualification or EPA based on any of these nine protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010:

- age,
- disability,
- gender,
- gender reassignment,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins),
- sexual orientation,
- religion or belief,
- married or in a civil partnership.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

SFJ Awards is committed to the development and support of learners including providing relevant information regarding entry and access arrangements, irrespective of any protected characteristics they may have.

Learners must:

Become familiar with the centre's/training provider's fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies.

Centre Tutors, Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers must:

Become familiar with and adhere to this policy and the centre's/training provider'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 and End-Point Assessments.

Ensure that all processes concerned with the development, delivery, assessment and award of SFJ Awards qualifications and End-Point Assessments are carried out in a fair and objective manner.

Heads of Centre must:

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.

Heads of Apprenticeship Training Provider must:

Ensure the training provider has fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies that meet all requirements put in place by IfATE.

Ensure training provider staff and learners are aware of this policy and the training provider's fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies.

Monitor the training provider's arrangements for fair access, equality and diversity.

External Quality Assurers (EQAs) must:

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.

Independent Assessors (IAs) must:

Ensure EPA delivery is conducted in line with SFJ Awards' fair access and equality, equal opportunities/equality and access to assessment policies and practices.

Support SFJ Awards in monitoring and advising on arrangements for fair access, equality and diversity.

Identify issues relating to fair access, equality and diversity, particularly in the application of assessment.

Product and Assessment Development Manager will:

Conduct Equality Impact Assessments on qualifications and materials developed by the Product 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) will:

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

4. Qualification and End-Point Assessment Development, Assessment, and Quality Assurance

SFJ Awards will comply with all current qualities legislation and will:

- Apply any fair access by design guidelines provided by our regulators, 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 and End-Point Assessment Development

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

SFJ Awards ensures that at the time of developing a qualification or End-Point Assessment, 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/training providers to enable learners to have equal access to training and assessment for qualifications, units and End-Point Assessment 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. Regulatory criteria and conditions

Regulatory Body	Regulatory guidance document	Regulatory Condition or Criterion
Ofqual	General Conditions of Recognition	C2, D2, G6
Qualifications Scotland Accreditation	Regulatory Principles (2021)	RP14 (also RP10,RP11,RP12 and RP13 have indirect links)
CCEA Regulation	General Conditions of Recognition	C2, D2, G6
Qualifications Wales	Qualification Wales Standard Conditions of recognition	C2, D2, G6

6. Useful Contacts and Links

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

Tel: 01142 841970 or email 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.

A copy of the Equality Act 2010 can be found on the HMSO website (hmso.gov.uk)

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

7. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed as part of the annual review cycle, and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance received from the Qualification and End-Point Assessment Regulators.

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 or epa@sfjawards.com.