

## **RELIGION, BELIEF (OR LACK OF BELIEF) EQUALITY POLICY STATEMENT**

### **1 Context**

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This policy statement sets out how Doncaster College will work towards the promotion of religion or belief equality in all of its activities. It outlines how the College will ensure that religious discrimination is challenged and eliminated through legislation and good practice.

This policy statement needs to be viewed in the context of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 and the extent of protection it provides in the context of religion or belief - a protected characteristic.

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the College's:

- Annual Inclusion Report
- Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Anti Harassment and Anti Bullying Policy (Staff and Students)
- Widening Participation Strategy
- Equality and Diversity Framework: An Ethical Framework
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Strategic Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2011-14
- Equality and Diversity Framework: Charter for Staff
- Community Involvement Strategy.

### **2 Definition**

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The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief unlawful in employment, education and training.

Religions deal with many basic questions, from how life began to what happens to us when we die and our relationships with each other and the world. Each religion has developed its own beliefs, rituals and ideas on these matters. Though many religions claim to be inspired by God, we need to remember that all religions originated and developed in particular historical, geographical and cultural situations that moulded and influenced them. Religion links together societies and individuals who share the same range of general beliefs, values, codes of behaviour, practices and traditions. Religion also links present day with the customs and practices of the past.

Religion generally includes the following:

- Faith and experience – a sense of belonging and commitment to something greater than ones self.
- Creed and doctrine – the system of beliefs and ideas held about a God, other divinities, creation and salvation.
- Codes and ethics – the way people behave because of their beliefs or non-beliefs.
- Ritual – all that is involved in practising the belief.
- Community – the social aspects of a religion.

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Faith communities are groupings of people who belong to the major world religions and of those who follow other forms of religious expression. This includes those that do not have a faith or religious belief.

Doncaster College will address issues of faith in a systematic and structured approach. It is necessary that we understand the values of faith, for our learners, customers, staff, and contractors, wherever possible, demonstrating a consensus between their faith, values and those of the College.

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 a legitimate aim.]

Associative Discrimination is directed discrimination against someone who associates with another person that possesses a protected characteristic.

Perceptive Discrimination is direct discrimination against some one 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 intimidation, 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 has taken place and has not taken reasonable steps to prevent it occurring.

### 3 Guiding Principles

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Doncaster College is fully committed to promoting equality of opportunity in religion and belief or lack of belief. All people have a right of equality of opportunity irrespective of

religion and belief or lack of belief. Doncaster College wishes to be recognised by the community as an organisation which provides good employment and educational opportunities for people of different religions or beliefs and we wish individuals who apply to us as a student or employee to know that they will receive fair treatment and be treated solely on their ability.

Therefore our policies aim to ensure that people of different religions or beliefs receive treatment that is fair, equitable and consistent with their skills and abilities.

Our practices are reviewed and impact assessed regularly to ensure they provide equality of opportunity through compliance with current legislation, good practice guidance and user feedback, with targets set for improvement through our Strategic Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2014-17.

Wherever possible the College will use Association of Colleges (AoC) good practice guidelines.

Doncaster College does not tolerate any prejudicial behaviour by any member of the College. The College has a zero tolerance to bullying, harassment and victimisation.

#### **4 Legislative Framework**

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The College will operate within the legislative framework of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 and strive, where possible, to go beyond legal compliance.

The College recognises the legal protection afforded to the protected characteristic of religion or belief (or lack of belief).

Within the Strategic Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2014 - 2017 the College will take action to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on the basis of religion, belief (or lack of belief)
- Promote equality of opportunity in relation to religion, belief (or lack of belief)
- Promote good relations between people of different religions, beliefs or lack of beliefs.

The College is committed to ensure that it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in the provision of goods, facilities, services or employment on the grounds of religion or belief.

Consequently, the College will not tolerate any forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, belief or lack of belief based upon:

- Direct Discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Associative Discrimination
- Perceptive Discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Harassment

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- Third Party Harassment
- Victimisation

The College recognises that legislation makes it unlawful on the grounds of religion or belief to discriminate on the basis of:

- A person's actual religion or belief or lack of belief
- A religion or belief that they are thought to have; or
- The religion or belief of someone else with whom they are associated.

The College will not tolerate discrimination of an individual because they:

- Hold a particular religion, belief or lack of belief
- Are married to a person of a particular religion, belief or lack of belief
- They appear to be of a particular religion belief or lack of belief because of the way they dress
- Are not of a particular religion, belief or lack of belief

The College recognises that the Equality Act 2010 prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief or lack of belief. It extends protection to cover victimisation and third party harassment.

In relation to indirect discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief and in line with the Equality Act 2010 the College recognises that it is capable of being justified if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The College 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 acceptable to all and meet different people's needs.