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<b>Responsible Person:</b> Clive Marchant, Chair of Trustees	<b>New Review Date:</b> January 2025
<b>Version:</b> 4	<b>Signature:</b>

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

**ABDO College** is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce and students (“students” for the purposes of this policy includes all types of learners including apprentices) and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

We are working towards the creation of a supportive and inclusive learning environment which is free from discrimination and where there is mutual respect and equality for all. The aim is for our workforce and our students to be truly representative of all sections of society, and for each employee and student to feel respected and able to give their best.

**ABDO College** - in providing services and facilities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

All employees including permanent staff, contractors, guest lecturers, shared services, trustees, students and college visitors are expected to act within the remit of this policy statement.

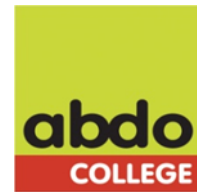
## 2. PURPOSE

This policy’s purpose is to:

1. Provide equality, fairness and respect for all our employees, whether permanent, temporary, part-time or full-time, and our students.

2. Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 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
- sexual orientation



3. Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in:
- pay and benefits
  - terms and conditions of employment
  - dealing with grievances and discipline
  - dismissal
  - redundancy
  - leave for parents
  - requests for flexible working
  - selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities
  - student applications and learning

### 3. KEY DEFINITIONS

**Equality** - The Equality and Human Rights Commission describes equality as “ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability”.

**Diversity** - Diversity can be described as having or being composed of differing elements. In the context of this policy, diversity exists in both visible and non-visible ways through our employees, students and stakeholders having physical, religious and cultural differences and varied life experiences and choices, views and perspectives.

**Direct Discrimination** - Direct Discrimination is the term used in law to describe a situation in which an individual is treated less favourably than someone else has been treated (or would be treated) because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic under the Equality Act.

**Indirect Discrimination** – Indirect discrimination can occur when action is taken which appears to treat everyone equally, but which in practice leads to people from a particular protected group under the Equality Act 2010 being treated less favourably than others. This may occur through the implementation of policies or procedures and will not be justified unless the action is needed to achieve a legitimate aim, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

**Victimisation** - Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have asserted their legal rights in line with the Equality Act 2010 or supported another individual to do so.

**Harassment** - Harassment can be described as unwanted conduct related to one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and has the purpose or



effect of violating the individual's dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive environment.

## 4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

A number of groups and individuals have a key role in the development and implementation of this policy:

### **Trustee Board**

- The Board has accountability for approving the policy and for ensuring it is aligned with the College's strategic objectives.

**The Principal & Senior Leadership Team** are responsible for ensuring the College:

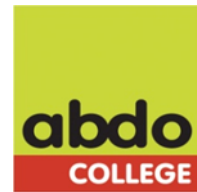
- Meets its legal obligations in relation to equality.
- Champions the EDI policy and associated actions.
- Undertakes equality impact assessments where required.
- Evaluates EDI data on staff and students in relation to engagement, recruitment, attainment and satisfaction.
- Acts on the data and agrees an EDI action plan which covers both student and staff EDI.
- Facilitates internal task groups to develop specific aspects of EDI work and work with external stakeholders in developing sustainable approaches to addressing these gaps.
- Engages and influences stakeholders such as employers in taking an inclusive approach to supporting students.
- Agrees, implements and monitors EDI approaches to support the College.
- Commissions relevant training and development to implement the policy and action plan.

**All managers** are responsible for ensuring:

- Their team have a clear understanding of the College's approach to EDI, identifying development as necessary.
- Ensuring all mandatory training is undertaken and it is recorded in our system.
- Bullying, harassment and discrimination are effectively tackled.
- EDI is embedded in everything we do.
- They treat all colleagues and students with dignity and respect.

**Students** are responsible for ensuring:

- Their behaviour and conduct always demonstrates respect and values people's differences.
- They undertake to actively engage in their learning to promote a positive environment for all students and staff.



- They fully support and cooperate with policies and actions designed to deliver a safe and nurturing environment within College or learning-related setting.
- They report all incidents, where discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation has occurred relating to the protected characteristics of others, be this on or off College premises.

**Staff** are responsible for ensuring:

- Their behaviour and conduct align with our College Values.
- The completion of mandatory training in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within their probation period of employment with the College.
- Participation in staff development ensuring that mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training is renewed annually.
- All incidents involving College students or staff where discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation has occurred relating to the protected characteristics of others, whilst taking part in College activity, be this on or off premises, are reported.
- They understand our EDI policy.
- Invited visitors, contractors and sub-contractors are aware of the College's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and commit fully to it.

**We are all responsible for ensuring:**

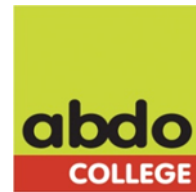
- The policy is understood and embedded into our approach.
- We treat everyone with respect, dignity and courtesy.
- We challenge behaviour which is not in accordance with our EDI policy and our values.

## **5. OUR COMMITMENTS**

**ABDO College commits to:**

1. Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and education as they are good practice and make business sense.
2. Create an environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination. Promote dignity and respect for all employees, applicants, students and visitors, receiving fair treatment in all aspects of their employment, applications and learning, and where individual differences and the contributions of all employees and students are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy during the onboarding process, and at regular intervals during employment. Responsibilities include employees conducting themselves to help ABDO College provide equal opportunities in employment, training and education, and



prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All employees should understand they, as well as ABDO College, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, students, customers, suppliers and the public.

3. Take seriously non-adherence of this policy and reports of non-compliance will be investigated. If any individual believes they have been harassed, intimidated or unlawfully discriminated against by any employee or student at ABDO College, they should contact the Principal or Head of Operational Services in accordance with the College Complaints process.

ABDO College Lecturers, Distance Learning Tutors and Dispensing and Contact Lens students are registered with the General Optical Council (GOC) and are also obliged to abide by the GOC Code of Conduct or governmental regulation in law.

The College strongly encourages informal and local resolutions of complaints. However, the College will use relevant disciplinary procedures as appropriate. Such acts will be dealt with as potential misconduct under the ABDO College grievance and/or disciplinary procedures (for staff), or non-academic misconduct (for students). Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. Depending on the nature of the complaint, referral to GOC Fitness to Practice may also be appropriate.

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.

4. Monitor the make-up of the workforce and student population regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

5. Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all ABDO College employees for their professional and personal development. Maintain and monitor training records via Breathe HR to ensure mandatory and annual refresher training is completed e.g. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion,



Health and Safety, IT and Information Security, Safeguarding and Prevent Duty.

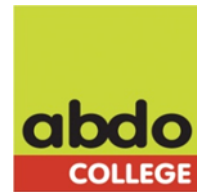
6. Make decisions concerning employees being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
7. Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
8. Work with our employer stakeholders to promote ABDO College's equality, diversity and inclusion policy and our aim that our students are representative of all sections of society e.g. in their recruitment activities and selection of students to undertake studies with ABDO College. Require evidence of an employer's equality, diversity and inclusion policy as a part of the student enrolment process.

Routinely share our equality, diversity and inclusion statistics with our employer stakeholders and work collaboratively to ensure that opportunities are offered to students regardless of demographic, ethnic background and/or additional learning needs. Ask our employer stakeholders to share their aspirations and work plans around EDI so that we have opportunities to potentially support.

9. Provide an outstanding learner experience, regardless of demographic, ethnic background and/or additional learning needs.

Proactively contact any student who declares any additional learning requirement or disability – upon commencing the course or during studies. Our Student Liaison staff ascertain their requirements and set up Negotiated Learning Plans considering recommendations from clinical diagnoses, previous experiences and individual concerns to develop a clear route to successful education for that student. This Plan is agreed by the Student, Supervisor and Distance Learning Coach and is briefed to each Lecturer to ensure that all stakeholders are fully aware of the student's requirements, as well as our approach to supporting them. Reasonable adjustments will be tailored to meet a student's specific needs and may include, for example, additional time, format of documents, structure of lectures.

Negotiated learning plans will be reviewed at regular intervals e.g. during induction and at the beginning of the academic year. Students can submit additional needs for assessment to the Student Liaison Officer at any time during the course of their studies.



### **6. AGREEMENT TO FOLLOW THIS POLICY**

The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by the ABDO College Management and Board of Trustees and is regularly reviewed to incorporate feedback from employee and student representatives.

### **7. OUR DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Details of the ABDO College grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found at [www.abdocollege.org.uk](http://www.abdocollege.org.uk). In the first instance, an employee should raise a potential grievance with their line manager.

Use of the ABDO College grievance or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

Students should raise any concerns in the first instance with their Personal Tutor or with their Course Leader, if their concerns relate to the Personal Tutor.