

2023
V3

Equal Opportunities & Inclusion Policy

Introduction

Debut is an equal opportunity company and is committed to a policy of treating all its learners, visitors' employees and job applicants equally.

Policy Statement

Employees have a duty to co-operate with the Company to ensure that this policy is effective to ensure equal opportunities and to prevent discrimination. Action under the Company's disciplinary procedure will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of improper discrimination. Serious breaches of the equal opportunities policy will be treated as gross misconduct and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal.

Equality

'Equality is about treating people fairly and ensuring that everyone is given a fair chance, it is not about treating everyone the same'. 'Equality recognises that people have many different needs that have to be met in different ways'.

Equity

'Equality is offering those rights and opportunities fairly, which means catering for peoples differences, so they are given fair access to the opportunities.

Diversity

'Diversity is about valuing difference between individuals and groups of people. Diversity welcomes these differences rather than trying to get rid of them. It is only where diversity is recognised and celebrated that there can be real equality'.

Debut are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All job applicants, employees, learners and others who work for us will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the below grounds. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or disciplinary action will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination. We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice it also makes sound business sense. Our Equal Opportunities and Inclusion policy, workshops, training and meetings will help all our employees and learners develop their full potential. The talents and resources of the workforce will be utilised fully to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Inclusion

This is an extension of all these things, which means all people, without exception, have the right to be included, respected and appreciated as valuable members of the community.

The Equality Act 2010

This Act's basic framework of protection safeguards against:

- direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in services and public functions, premises, work, education, associations and transport
- changing the definition of gender reassignment, by removing the requirement for medical supervision
- providing protection for people discriminated against because they are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic
- clearer protection for breastfeeding mothers
- applying a uniform definition of indirect discrimination to all protected characteristics
- harmonising provisions allowing voluntary positive action

The Equality Act brings together 116 separate pieces of legislation. Protection from unlawful discrimination is provided by this act in relation to the following 9 protected characteristics:

- *age*
- *disability*
- *gender reassignment*
- *marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)*
- *pregnancy and maternity*
- *race*
- *religion or belief*
- *sex*
- *sexual orientation*

We will do all that we can to ensure that all employees who work with us and all learners who learn with us have the opportunity to participate fully and achieve their full potential and will take positive steps to eliminate physical, social and economic barriers to access. We adopt a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and will ensure that all employees and learners accept their individual responsibility to uphold equality and show respect to others. All employees and learners are expected to actively promote equality and diversity by valuing and respecting the many differences which exist between people.

Debut will refer to Government guidance on all equality matters as required and will ensure they keep abreast of all policy and regulation updates and amend their service and policy accordingly. Debut takes all reasonable steps to recruit learners and to employ and promote employees on the basis of their abilities and qualifications without regard to race, religion, colour, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage/civil partnership status, age, national origin, disability or sexual orientation. The Company will appoint, train, develop and promote on the basis of merit and ability alone.

The designated Equal Opportunities personnel are:

Carla Hales
Director of Tuition/E & D Lead
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Linda Edwards
Equality & Diversity Officer
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Compliance

The Senior Management team have overall responsibility for ensuring that Debut operates within a framework for promoting Equality & Diversity. The Center Manager is responsible for reviewing the Equality & Diversity Policy annually and updating it if new legislation needs to be followed. Debut will ensure that all advertising and publicity material avoids stereotypical images in both language and illustrations and be free of discriminative wording.

Our policy sets out clear guidelines to ensure employees must not harass or intimidate other employees or learners on the grounds of race, religion, colour, sex, age, national origin, disability or sexual orientation. Such behaviour will be treated as gross misconduct in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure. Employees should draw the attention of their line manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices. Learners should draw the attention of their tutor to suspected discriminatory acts or practices they will then be supported in their complaint by Debut. Employees and learners must not victimise or retaliate against another person who has made allegations or complaints of sex or racial discrimination, or discrimination on the grounds of disability or sexual orientation or provided information about such discrimination. Such behaviour by employees will be treated as gross misconduct in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure. Employees should support colleagues who suffer such treatment and are making a complaint.

Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring their staff understand Equality & Diversity and how to report any perceived discrimination, harassment or bullying. All employees and learners have a big responsibility for promoting Equality & Diversity and for ensuring that they both neither intentionally nor unintentionally discriminate, harass nor bully fellow colleagues or learners.

Tutors are responsible for promoting and raising learners understanding and awareness of Equality & Diversity. Promotion and awareness will be raised via learner reviews and visits and also within classroom sessions.

We will raise employees and learners awareness and understanding of Equality & Diversity in accordance with it commitment centre wide and this will be achieved in a number of ways;

- Regular staff training, awareness and updates
- External advice and guidance from approved sources such as the Equality & Human Rights Commission and ACAS
- Poster Campaigns / Dedicated Equality & Diversity notice boards within our locations
- Raising awareness at learner inductions
- Raising learner awareness at reviews and documenting this on learning journeys to confirm understanding
- Incorporating activities within lesson plans and schemes of work, naturally embedding the subject (including making it industry related)
- Promoting Equality & Diversity in the Learner Handbook
- Incorporating E&D workshops into the learner programme

Fair Recruitment

The recruitment process must result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job or course in respect of experience and qualifications. Debut ensures that any position is available to all by clear and open advertising, with the selection process being standardised and open to scrutiny. Debut Senior Staff who are responsible for the DBS clearance and safer recruitment of staff have received training in Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment. See Debut's Safer Recruitment Policy for further information.

Grievances and complaints

All allegations of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The Company will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints.

Monitoring equal opportunity

The Company will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions for both learners and employees; and personnel practices and procedures in order to assess whether equal opportunity is being achieved. The Company will, from time to time, look at:

- The sex and ethnic composition of the workforce of each department and changes in distribution over periods of time;
- The sex and ethnic composition of the learners attending courses and changes in distribution over periods of time;
- The selection decisions for recruitment, promotion, transfer and training, according to the sex or racial group of candidates, and the reasons for those decisions.

The Company will, from time to time, review the selection criteria and personnel procedures to ensure that they do not include requirements or conditions which constitute, or may lead to, unlawful indirect discrimination.

Equality & Equal Pay Act 2010

Debut complies with the Statutory Code of Practice Equality Act 2010, i.e.

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) gives women (and men) a right to equal pay for equal work. It replaces previous legislation, including the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the equality provisions in the Pensions Act 1995.

Debut ensures that employees are entitled to know how their pay is calculated. A staff member's job description will detail working hours, hourly rate and if applicable, overtime or bonus rates. Debut does not prevent employees from having discussions with Senior Managers to establish if there are differences in pay, although it does request that employees keep pay rates confidential from people outside the workplace. An employee who thinks they are not receiving equal pay can write to their employer asking for information that will help them establish whether there is a pay difference and if so the reasons for the difference.

Learners Statement

Debut has a strong commitment to helping employed and voluntary groups of workers to increase their skills. To this end, the company strives to recruit learners onto programmes regardless of their perceived barriers to learning. These barriers may be basic skills needs such as literacy or numeracy needs caused by dyslexia, lack of formal education or due to the learner being a speaker of a language other than English or barriers in relation to their disability. Debut's Center Manager fosters links with Essex County Council's Employability & Skills Intervention Team who work hard to place NEET learners in education so they are aware of funded courses available and opportunities for their future.

Debut encourages the employers of our learners to carry out thorough self evaluation regarding their own practices relating to equality and diversity and to work with employers who feel the need for advice and assistance with their practices. The company will assist those companies that require help with their own basic skills needs policies in order that they may remain current.

Debut's expectations requires Employers to become involved in their learners' programmes and progress; the company will monitor attendance and ensure that employers are kept informed of attendance rates, in addition to inviting the employers to evaluate the learning that has taken place. Debut informs all Employers of the expectations that they have regarding their role and how to support their apprentice in the workplace, ensuring inclusion and equality is upheld at all times. Where there are trade unions representatives the company will endeavour to include them in the learner's needs and progress.

Learner Additional Support

At the heart of this policy is the pre entry diagnostic screening that will be carried out with every learner prior to their being offered a place onto one of our programmes. This will ensure that learners are matched to the right provision/course; advisers will develop individual learning journeys, based on the results of the screening, with clear benchmarks for easier monitoring. Where learners are committed to longer periods of learning, their learning journeys will include long and short term goals; learners can expect to receive regular written feedback on their progress and advice and guidance on progression opportunities. Those learners that require additional support will be directed to the appropriate provision. Learners are encouraged to complete a section on their application form to disclose any information regarding their learning history, home environment, emotions and feelings, social factors, work readiness skills, disabilities and learning difficulties so that any needs are supported.

The designated Support Staff ensure that appropriate support and guidance is put in place by means of a support plan and followed up with monthly reviews. Additional support funding may be applied for if available. If no funding is available and a learner is found to require any additional support, Debut does not deny learners support but will ensure help is offered, either by Debut support staff or outside agencies. Please refer to Debut's PSED Support Policy for further information. Due to disability disclosure constraints and confidentiality issues, it will be the decision of the learner to inform their employer of their support needs and this will be encouraged by their Assessor so information is shared openly and fully.

COVID-19 and E&D

Debut are mindful that during COVID-19 we are supporting all learners and continuing to be inclusive. At no time during COVID should a learner be at a disadvantage or their learning become affected. We will ensure that any learner in the 'vulnerable groups' personal situation is fully assessed so that any learning provision changes can be implemented. This may include ensuring that pregnant learners attend separately to their class on a 1:1 basis with their tutor to minimise risk (if they are happy to do so and do not want to implement a learning break). We also make sure learners are not at a disadvantage during remote learning by finding out if they have any specific barriers that may prevent their learning continuing. This may include poor or no internet supply, no ICT equipment such as computer/laptop/tablet or kits for practical learning.

Debut will look at each individual's needs and will put in place measures to alleviate any areas so that the learner can continue to progress through their qualification. We are also aware that during lockdowns, learners mental health may deteriorate. We will ensure that tutors have regular contact and support is provided to help them personally. If they do not feel that they can participate in small group Zoom lessons, we will set up 1:1 lessons so that they are more comfortable learning.

E&D Training

E&D training is an indispensable part of an effective service that has E&D at the heart of its values. It is essential that every staff member is trained to perform his or her job effectively and with an up-to-date and full knowledge of E&D. All employees will be trained in E&D prior to being allocated any new role. Training will be refreshed intermittently and knowledge will be embedded or underpinned at regular staff meetings.

Learner Knowledge & Awareness of E&D

Debut ensures that it embeds E&D throughout a learner's programme and will also evaluate learning has taken place by means of a workshop, questioning, practical assessments, review questions, learner questionnaires and completion of a E&D activities. This subject is also included in the learner FOCUS BOOKLET.

Access to Fair Assessment Policy Statement

Debut seeks to provide equal access to assessment for all candidates, ensuring that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment and that any special arrangements for candidates preserve the validity, reliability and integrity of the qualification. Debut will promote special arrangements for candidates with a particular assessment requirement, according to individual need, ensuring such candidates are not disadvantaged or advantaged in relation to other candidates.

Transgender, Gender Reassignment, Non-Binary

Debut celebrates and values the diversity of its learners and aims to ensure that all transgender learners are treated fairly and with dignity and respect. Debut are committed to protecting the rights, wellbeing and safeguarding of Gender diverse children and Trans and Non-binary young people. We are aware of the challenges these often-vulnerable children and young people face. To enhance Trans and Non-binary inclusion, promote equality and eliminate transphobic bullying the college ensures all staff are trained in E&D and it is refreshed regularly.

We will also:

- challenge gender stereotypes and unnecessarily gendered aspects of school life
- improve attendance and achievement of gender diverse, trans and non-binary pupils
- know how to combat transphobic bullying.
- ensure that LGBT is discussed openly and activities are included in the curriculum so that stereotypes are challenged
- celebrate LGBT history month, transgender awareness week
- ensure we do not use boy/girl seating or split genders into separate teams
- ensure that any any new names or preferred pronouns to use for a learner is known by all staff
- staff are expected to keep an open mind if a learner discloses and not to minimise or disregard what they are saying. It is important the person's gender identity is respected and the college is flexible and supportive.
- provide confidentiality when supporting trans learners
- toilets are not designated for any gender and can be used by all

Pregnancy & Maternity

Debut aims to provide an environment where learners are supported and treated fairly and with dignity and respect during pregnancy and maternity and while breastfeeding. We will complete risk assessments and review the learner's health monthly and put in place any adaptations we can to ensure they can continue with their course in safety.

Monitoring the Policy is upheld

This is achieved by the following:

- Monitoring learner and staff knowledge
- Moderation of learner review
- Staff Meetings
- Mediation and monitoring of feedback from learners
- End of Year Feedback from Staff

Widening participation

Debut is committed to widening participation in employing staff and in higher education and is keen to see a socially and culturally diverse employee and learner population.

Linked Policies

Please refer to Debut's linked policies below for additional information regarding Equal Opportunities & Inclusion Standards:

- Admissions & Application Policy
- Academic & Vocational Appeals Policy
- Access to Fair Assessment Policy
- Code of Conduct – Staff Policy
- Code of Conduct – Learner Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Employer (Work Based) Support & Expectation Policy
- Guidance Policy
- Grievance Policy
- IAG Policy
- Induction Procedure – Staff Policy
- Induction Procedure – Learner Policy
- Internal Quality Assurance Policy
- Learner Support & Super Group Policy
- Learner Safeguarding & Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Learner Positive Behaviour Management Policy
- Marketing & Advertising Policy
- Review & Appraisal – Staff Policy
- Review & Appraisal – Learner Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff CPD/Personal Development Training Policy
- Teaching & Learning Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
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