

## Equality and Diversity Policy

The achievement of the Equality and Diversity Policy at work is central to VetSkill's mission as an Awarding Body.. Our policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect the main provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011. At VetSkill, you have a right to be treated with respect and dignity during your time with us as a learner, member of staff, visitor or service user. To achieve this, VetSkill will ensure that you are not treated unfairly for reasons which cannot be legitimately justified. VetSkill is proud of and values the contributions made by the rich diversity of all who work and learn here.

### General Policy

1. It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of any of the nine "protected characteristics" in the Equality Act 2010. These are: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.
2. VetSkill will not discriminate directly or indirectly, or harass learners, members of staff or clients because of the protected characteristics of disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services.
3. VetSkill will not allow for the concept of associative discrimination, which is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
4. VetSkill will not directly discriminate against or harass anyone based on a perception that he or she has a particular protected characteristic when he or she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic.
5. VetSkill will take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment by a third party e.g. a client, customer or learner. Any reported incident involving a third party will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with VetSkill's Equality and Diversity policy.
6. No employee will be disadvantaged, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion, because they have made or supported a complaint or have raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so, or being about to do so.
7. VetSkill is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity and diversity for all and continues to formulate and implement policies and practices to this end.

## Responsibility

- Overall responsibility for the Equality and Diversity Policy within VetSkill lies with the Chief Operating Officer and the Standards Manager for ensuring that the Policy is implemented in their areas of responsibility. The relevant member of staff will provide reports and relevant documents; maintaining VetSkill's awareness of statutory equality duties.
- All other members of the Senior Management Team or their representatives are responsible for taking any action or decisions relating to equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to employment matters, coordinating the monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy and providing general guidance in relation to this policy.
- The Standards Manager is responsible for implementing VetSkill's staff Equality and Diversity Policy and for taking action on decisions relating to equality and diversity in the staffing and operation of the organisation.
- VetSkill will ensure that all staff and learners are made aware of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and procedures. All employees and learners/apprentices of VetSkill are responsible for ensuring that their actions are carried out in terms of the general policy and codes of practice. They may be held personally accountable should any complaint arise.
- The development and monitoring of the Policy is supported by VetSkill's Chief Operating Officer and Standards Manager, who are responsible for developing and coordinating initiatives that will enhance diversity, equality and inclusion within VetSkill.
- The Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that the buildings are accessible to all staff, learners, apprentices and visitors.
- The Standards Manager is responsible for advising on VetSkill's grievance procedures.
- Staff responsible for developing and reviewing assessment documentation should ensure due consideration is given to equality, diversity and inclusion issues.
- Assessment and Quality Assurance staff are responsible for ensuring any assessment documentation and support materials reflect sensitivity to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- All staff are responsible for ensuring that inappropriate behaviour is challenged and reported.
- Learners and apprentices are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of VetSkill's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and understand its purpose and aims.
- Learners and apprentices are responsible for accepting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Learners and apprentices recognise that inappropriate behaviour will be challenged and reported whether in a training environment or at work placement.

## Application

The general policy relates to all aspects of the employment and learning environment, including advertisements, recruitment, pay, terms and conditions of service, training, secondment, redeployment, benefits, promotions, grievance and disciplinary procedures, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, centre approvals and admissions practices. VetSkill will consider equality and diversity implications when entering into contractual relationships with other organisations' such as collaborative programmes

- People not employed by VetSkill but who are involved in VetSkill's activities such as Independent End Point Assessors (IEPAs) Lead Independent End Point Assessors (LIEPAs), visitors, clients, external contractors etc. are expected to operate within the terms of the general policy.
- The Policy applies to the treatment of existing as well as potential employees and learners/apprentices.
- Wherever possible VetSkill will use ACAS good practice guidelines to support application of the policy.
- Application of the policy will be aligned to the requirements of VetSkill's Regulators and other regulatory requirements such as the RCVS, ESFA and Institute for Apprenticeships.

VetSkill respects the dignity and diversity of all our learners, apprentices, providers and employees, regardless of personal characteristics and differences. It is our aim to give everyone fair and appropriate access to the greatest opportunity, and we will employ positive action, and/or make reasonable adjustments, to develop and fulfil an individual's potential. We value the contribution each person can make to VetSkill. We believe that treating people fairly, with dignity and respect, is right and makes good business sense.

### **This means that VetSkill will:**

- Not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation on any grounds.
- Provide appropriate, sensitive and accessible services to everyone.
- Work with stakeholders to eradicate prejudice, discrimination, harassment and negative stereotyping.
- Support campaigns for local and national initiatives which treat people equally and protect groups from discrimination.
- Ensure that everybody who studies or works at, or with, VetSkill is respected and valued.
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners, apprentices and staff to ensure fair access to services and opportunities.
- Ensure that any subcontractors, including other employers, commit to VetSkill's Equality and Diversity agenda by advancing equality and challenging discrimination
- Promote and support the use of a range of flexible working patterns to enable those working for VetSkill to balance home and work responsibilities.
- Support people in a phased return to work after extended periods of absence.
- Treat people fairly and develop staff, learners and apprentices so that they are able to reach their full potential.

## Implementation

- Consultation with staff, learners and apprentices will be a necessary part of implementing the general policy and the specific policies and procedures.
- Staff, learners and apprentices will be informed of their responsibilities in relation to promotion and implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and procedures during their induction to VetSkill and at various intervals during their employment or study.
- Appropriate training will be provided to assist with implementation of the Policy.
- Advice on the implementation of the specific policies will be available from the Chief Operating Officer and Standards Manager.
- VetSkill will continue to conduct comprehensive and effective monitoring of all aspects of staffing and the learner/apprentice populations. VetSkill is committed to the collection of statistics, analysis of data and presentation of data, as well as monitoring on an on-going basis. VetSkill will continue to monitor and act upon areas of concern and/or disparity with regard to equality, diversity and inclusion in respect of: learner success; withdrawal; achievement; representation and all aspects of learner and centre feedback.
- VetSkill will adopt the best practice in the light of both internal and external research and experience.
- Appropriate action is taken in case of complaint.

## Complaints

Any complaint made with regard to inequality shall be dealt with under the terms of the appropriate Complaints Procedures, bearing in mind the safeguarding of individuals. Staff, learners or apprentices who feel that they have experienced discrimination from third party members will receive support from VetSkill who will take appropriate action where discrimination has been found.

**Learners and apprentices** should pursue this in accordance with VetSkill Complaints Procedure and contact the Standards Manager.

**Employees** who wish to make a formal complaint can find further details in the staff handbook on the I drive. They may also seek advice from the Standards Manager.

**Parents, Members of the Public and Employers.** Parents/carers with learners or apprentices under the age of 18 years should feel free to approach their son or daughter's training provider or employer. Other third parties, employers, and members of the community can address their concerns by writing to: The Standards Manager, Unit 1, Headland House, Chord Business Park, London Road, Godmanchester PE29 2BQ