



Equality and Diversity Policy

Version:	10
Policy Owner:	Simon Jukes
Associated documents:	Reasonable Adjustments & Special Considerations Policy / Mitigating circumstance Assessment Materials design and development process Fair Access Policy Statement Disciplinary Policy Sanctions Policy Complaints Policy Appeals Policy
Ofqual General Conditions:	Suitability for continuing recognition, A1; Arrangements with centres, C2; Accessibility of Qualifications D2; Ensuring assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered E4; Arrangements for reasonable adjustments G6 Arrangements for Special consideration G7.
Review date:	Dec 2024
Reviewed by:	Stephanie Jones
Agreed by:	Senior Leadership Team
Next review date:	Dec 2025
Summary of changes: Full review and update to reflect current processes and associated policies.	

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Introduction

Marshall Assessment's Equality and Diversity Policy incorporates the following core values:

- Everyone will be treated fairly
- We strive to provide the highest quality of assessment service and a welcoming environment for all
- We will offer an open and accepting place of work to all employees and consultants
- We understand and work to remove any bias from our assessment materials making assessment practices and assessment materials accessible to all
- We will respect everyone as an individual

Policy Statement

Marshall Assessment aims to ensure that all employees, consultants, apprentices and stakeholders are treated equally, under the characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010:

1. age
2. disability
3. gender reassignment
4. marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)

5. pregnancy and maternity
6. race
7. religion or belief
8. sex
9. sexual orientation.

This policy helps to ensure that Marshall Assessment meets its responsibilities for employees, consultants, apprentices and stakeholders.

Marshall Assessment works to create an environment in which cultural diversity and individual differences are positively valued in an atmosphere free from harassment and discrimination. Marshall Assessment takes its legal and moral obligations seriously with respect to equality and diversity. Marshall Assessment welcomes dialogue with groups and individuals on ways in which its equality and diversity policies and practice can be enhanced and improved.

Marshall Assessment is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce and eliminating unlawful discrimination across all our activities. The aim is for our workforce to be truly supportive of all sections of society and our customers and for each employee and apprentice to feel respected and able to achieve their potential.

Marshall Assessment, in providing End-Point assessment services, is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

In addition, all apprentices should have equal opportunity to access our products and services, and the content of our qualifications (end-point assessments) should reflect the wide diversity of our audiences. The aim of the policy is that our end-point assessment systems and our code of conduct for all MA personnel (employees and consultants) demonstrate a fair and equitable service to all our apprentices and stakeholders.

All MA personnel are committed to the enactment of this policy.

This policy alongside MA's Fair Access Policy statement.

Scope

The Policy covers all five types of potential discrimination set out in the Equalities Act 2010:

Direct discrimination – if an employer treats one person less favourably than another person because of their race, sex, age group, etc.

Associative discrimination - discrimination against a person because they may have an association with someone with a particular protected characteristic, e.g., where a non-disabled employee is discriminated against because of action they need to take to care for a disabled dependant.

Unintended bias - A fair and unbiased assessment uses contexts that are equally familiar to all and uses words that have common meanings to all. Effective assessment processes yield evidence and conclusions that are meaningful, appropriate, and fair to all relevant subgroups of apprentices.

Perceptive discrimination – discrimination against a person because the discriminator thinks the person possesses that characteristic, even if they do not.

Indirect discrimination – this is where a policy applies to everyone but has a disproportionate impact on people with a protected characteristic, e.g., only recruiting staff with 10 or more years' experience would discriminate against younger applicants.

Harassment - subjecting another person to behaviour, speech or physical contact that is inappropriate and unwelcome, e.g., jokes, gossip, etc.

Marshall Assessment will ensure that its equality and diversity policy commitments are delivered through the following strategies and processes:

- The implementation, monitoring and review of all policies, targets, actions and outcomes will be evaluated with the consideration of equality and diversity
- Staff development/ training to support staff at all levels of the organisation in the delivery of equality and diversity objectives
- Working with partner organisations such as employers in the field of diversity, inclusion and equalities to enhance equality of opportunity
- Ensuring that quality assurance incorporates equality issues
- Reporting on progress against equality objectives
- Legal duties regarding Race, Disability and Gender will be regularly reviewed to ensure we comply with the current legislation.

Who is this policy for?

This policy is intended for all:

MA employees

MA consultants

Third parties

Apprentices

Customers / stakeholders

This policy applies to:

All EPA work across all standards

All audit and compliance activities

Any other business activities (marketings, recruitment, stakeholder engagement)

MA is opposed to discrimination on any grounds, including those of race, language, colour, nationality, ethnicity, regional or national origin, gender, rurality, sexual orientation, marital status, age, religious belief, disability, or social background.

All staff members representing Marshall Assessment, whether full or part time or consultants are responsible for adhering to Marshall Assessment's Equality and Diversity ideology as set out in this Policy. All staff will be required to:

- observe all procedures in this policy and other supporting policy documents /procedures
- show respect for Marshall Assessment and encourage others to do the same

- take responsibility for eliminating discrimination
- treat everyone with respect.

Implementation

MA will commit to supporting a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, where individual differences and the contributions of all personnel are recognised and valued. This commitment includes training and or/providing information and guidance within our training resources library, which is available to all employees and consultants, to inform individuals about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy.

Responsibilities include all personnel (includes employees and consultants) helping the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All personnel should understand they, as well as the organisation, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, consultants, customers (including apprentices) and the public.

MA will take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others during the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Complaints and Appeals: Ensuring Equality and Diversity

A robust and transparent complaints and appeals process is essential for Marshall Assessment to uphold its responsibilities regarding Equality and Diversity. We have created and published the complaints and appeals process in accessible formats and plain language so that all apprentices, employers, and stakeholders understand how to raise concerns. We also offer the ability to submit complaints or appeals in various formats (e.g. written, digital etc.) to ensure inclusivity for those with disabilities or language barriers.

At Marshall Assessment we can also allow for reasonable adjustments in how complaints and appeals are submitted and handled, ensuring that apprentices with additional needs can fully participate in the process.

Staff Selection, Recruitment and Development

Marshall Assessment's procedures will ensure that there is neither 'direct' nor 'indirect' discrimination in staff recruitment, selection or development.

Marshall Assessment will aim to:

- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all personnel, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation, the business and the service MA provides.
- Ensure decisions concerning personnel are based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy.
- Conducting our business in a professional, respectful fashion, to include handling sensitive information in a secure fashion and treating all apprentices and stakeholders with dignity.

We will ensure that:

- Recruitment and selection documentation and procedures are non-discriminatory
- Members of recruitment and selection panels are trained in Equality and Diversity
- Consideration is given to candidates' views of the recruitment process and that feedback is offered
- Our complaints procedure is followed in cases of alleged discrimination or unfair treatment
- Staff Development in equality and diversity issues is included in Marshall Assessment's staff development plan / CPD
- Person specification and advertisements will reflect the objective requirements of the job.

Materials design & development

The process of designing of assessments materials will include identifying and precluding any unjustifiable barriers that might prevent Apprentices who share particular protected characteristics from demonstrating their knowledge, skills, and behaviours, commensurate with the apprenticeship standard they are enrolled on. This includes Apprentices with physical disabilities.

We are committed to:

- Developing qualification and end-point assessment products that are accessible to, and representative of, the Apprentices taking them, where these are not restricted by externally determined conditions
- Developing end-point assessment instruments and content which are free from bias and do not discriminate against specific groups or characteristics

We will continue to develop our relationships with relevant stakeholders in developing our guides, support materials and resources, and ensure our reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy allows adjustments to be effectively, reliably and consistently applied, so fair access is available to all apprentices.

By doing these things we will ensure Apprentices with a protected characteristic, when they are undertaking one of our assessments are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged in comparison to Apprentices who do not share that characteristic.

We monitor and review equality and diversity throughout the development of assessments, qualifications and resource materials, by talking to occupational experts, end-users and professional associations, providers, apprentices and employers, to ensure our materials are fit for purpose.

- Information regarding the application of reasonable adjustments will be recorded, monitored, and used to inform future developments
- The language used in all materials will be clear, free from bias and appropriate to the target group

All assessment materials are reviewed against this policy.

Delivery and assessment of apprenticeship standards we are approved to assess.

We aim to provide equality of opportunity for apprentices to access all our assessments and offer remote and on-site assessments, in accordance with assessment plan guidance, regulatory guidance and assessment discretions and any external factors that can require us to adapt our offer.

We are committed to ensuring that assessment environments are welcoming and safe for all, and we expect the conduct of Marshall Assessment personnel (employees and consultants) to fully support this aim, through appropriate professional and inclusive behaviour and conduct, as stipulated in our codes of conduct.

We have a duty to ensure that the integrity of all end-point assessments is maintained. At the same time, Marshall Assessment and its providers and employers have a duty to ensure individual Apprentices have access to apprenticeship standards and assessments that are most appropriate for their individual needs.

The EPA delivery team, the quality assurance team and the materials development teams will ensure that assessments, support material and delivery methods, are free from bias and avoid stereotyping and discrimination. Marshall Assessment's assessors will encourage apprentices to explore equality and diversity issues where required and in line with apprenticeship standards' assessment plan.

Marshall Assessment will ensure that there are no features present in any assessment materials we have developed that could disadvantage any groups of learners that share a particular characteristic or barriers to entry, other than those directly related to the purpose of the standard / qualification. The nature of any such features or barriers will be stated and the inclusion of the requirements that create the barrier justified in terms of why they are required for the assessment qualification. This will be documented. A Bias Equality Checklist which is used throughout the development of assessment materials means that any equality issues can be addressed at the early draft stages.

Language

Marshall Assessment's materials are written using only level appropriate language and terms, in plain English and using standard English Grammar. Our process of reviewing materials includes a check to ensure that, for example, colloquialisms and idioms are avoided, along with the exclusion of any terms which may be unfamiliar to an apprentice at the respective level.

Any sector specific technical terms are only used where appropriate and necessary, and in line with the expected level of understanding at an appropriate level.

Reasonable Adjustments

We are committed to fulfilling our duty to meet the access arrangements and reasonable adjustments requested for our apprentices in a way that does not disadvantage either them or their peers.

Examples could include:

- Providing additional time for assessments.
- Offering assessments in alternative formats (e.g. large print).
- Allowing the use of assistive technologies or a scribe.
- Adjusting physical environments (e.g., wheelchair-accessible venues).

We will always consider a request relating to access to our qualifications / end-point assessment, except where acceptance of the request is not logistically possible or where it would undermine the criteria for the assessment.

The process for requesting reasonable adjustments is laid out in our Reasonable Adjustment Policy which is made available to all via our website.

Award

All certification requests to the relevant agency are subject to Marshall Assessment's quality assurance checks before confirmation of a grade is shared with the provider and we allow a window of 15 working days before requesting certification, to allow relevant parties to enquire or appeal against an assessment decision.

Monitoring the success and relevance of our arrangements

Marshall Assessment is committed to complying with all current and relevant legislation. As part of the Apprentice registration and certification processes for End-Point Assessment, we may collect information on diversity, requests for special considerations, access arrangements and feedback from apprentices, Training Providers and employers. All relevant issues identified that suggest that our EPA services may have unnecessarily impacted on apprentices will be reported back to the Compliance Director, the Board and if necessary, the Regulator. The Operations Director has overall responsibility for ensuring that amendments to assessment materials are made, where necessary, and in accordance with the procedures for developing and reviewing assessment materials. Details of ongoing reviews will be made available to the regulators upon request.

We will review the policy annually and revise it as and when necessary, in response to changes in the law, feedback or requests. We may also update this policy as part of good practice guidance issued by

the regulatory authorities (e.g., to align with any processes established by the regulatory authorities such as Ofqual).

Responsibilities of Marshall Assessment

It is the responsibility of the Marshall Assessment Board to ensure that the Equality and Diversity Policy agreed is implemented, monitored, and reviewed effectively and to use effective leadership and management to ensure that:

- there is no unfair discrimination
- they act positively where appropriate to ensure legal duties are met
- that all employees are aware of their Equality and Diversity duties and responsibilities
- to ensure no unfair or unlawful discrimination takes place on grounds of race, gender, disability, or age and to recognise that they will be liable for the discriminatory acts of employees
- policies, procedures, and action plans comply with anti-discrimination legislation and are not unlawfully discriminatory
- they take responsibility for eliminating discrimination
- they promote equality of opportunity
- they act positively where necessary to redress any unjustified disparities whether by age, disability, or gender in the fields of education, training and employment.
- EPA provision is responsive, accessible, and flexible in meeting diverse learners needs

Expectations

No party shall under this agreement discriminate within the meaning of the Equality Legislation against any person on the grounds of their race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age.

All members of staff, apprentices and employers providing employment to apprentices under Marshall Assessment care, shall comply with the Equality Act 2010 and all incorporated legislation, including the Disability Equality Duty, the Race Equality Duty and the Gender Equality Duty, (together the "Equality Duties"); and specific duties imposed on public authorities by each of the Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) Regulations 2005; the Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2004; and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) Order 2006.

Contact

For any queries relating to this policy, please contact Helpdesk@marshall-assessment.com