

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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**Date: 2026-2029**

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**Accessibility Statement:**

If you have any learning difficulty, disability or health problem, that means you are unable to use the policy in the way laid out in this document, or you may require additional support, please contact the college to discuss how the process can be adjusted to support your needs. Should you require this guide in an alternative format please contact [policyteam@hca.ac.uk](mailto:policyteam@hca.ac.uk).

**Document Control**

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## **1. Summary and Purpose**

- 1.1 This document outlines the college's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for everyone within our college community, including employees, students, contractors and visitors.
- 1.2 It explains how the college seeks to provide equality of opportunity for members of the college community and summarises the definitions of discrimination set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.3 The policy also outlines how this commitment is put into practice and how members of the college community share responsibility for supporting an inclusive environment.

## **2. Definitions**

### **2.1 Bullying**

- a) Bullying is not defined in law but can be understood as behaviour that is repeated and intended to cause physical or emotional harm.
- b) Bullying may include offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or the abuse or misuse of power (which does not always involve formal authority) intended to undermine, humiliate or denigrate a person.
- c) Bullying is often directed at individuals because of characteristics such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance or disability.

### **2.2 Freedom of Speech**

- a) A climate in which students and staff can discuss a range of topics — including complex and controversial issues — in the knowledge that they will be listened to and treated with dignity, tolerance and civility. Everyone, including those from marginalised groups, should be able to speak up without fear of harassment or discrimination, which should never be tolerated or excused.

### **2.3 Harassment**

- a) Harassment, as defined by Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010, includes unwanted behaviour which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment because of, or connected to, one or more protected characteristics. Under the college definition we understand harassment to include domestic violence. Domestic violence can also involve control, coercion, threats and stalking.

## 2.4 Hate Crime

- a) The term 'hate crime' can be used to describe a range of criminal behaviours where the alleged perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the alleged victim's protected characteristics.

## 2.5 Protected Characteristics

- a) The Equality Act 2010 states it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their:
  - age
  - disability
  - gender identity
  - marriage or civil partnership
  - pregnancy and maternity
  - race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
  - religion or belief
  - sex
  - sexual orientation

## 2.6 Sexual Misconduct

- a) Sexual misconduct relates to all unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Sexual harassment,<sup>1</sup> including unwanted conduct which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
  - Assault, including rape<sup>2</sup>
  - Physical unwanted sexual advances, including intimidation, or promising resources or benefits in return for sexual favours<sup>3</sup>
  - Distributing private and personal explicit images or video footage of an individual without their consent.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.7 Unwanted Behaviours

- a) Behaviour which intends to, or has created the effect of, violating someone's dignity by creating a hostile, intimidating, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

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<sup>1</sup> as defined by Section 26 (2) of the Equality Act 2010

<sup>2</sup> as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003

<sup>3</sup> as set out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission: Sexual harassment and the law, 2017

<sup>4</sup> as defined by the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015

## 2.8 Victimization

- a) Less favourable treatment of someone because they have made, or have helped someone else make, a complaint of bullying and/or harassment.

## 2.9 Violence/aggression

- a) Violence/aggression can be defined as any incident in which a member of the college community is abused, threatened, or assaulted by another member of the college community.

### **3. Policy Statement**

3.1 This policy sets out the commitment of Hereford College of Arts, including the commitment of the Board of Governors, to ensure equality of opportunity and to prevent unlawful or unfair discrimination and harassment.

3.2 The policy applies to all members of the college community, including staff, students, prospective students, contractors and visitors.

3.3 We are committed to the principles of equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and respect for individuals, and to creating and maintaining an inclusive environment. We value and celebrate diversity as an important part of achieving the college's strategic aims and long-term success.

3.4 We foster a supportive and inclusive learning, working and social environment where everyone feels valued and able to achieve their potential.

3.5 Opportunities are open to everyone and decisions are based on merit and free from bias. In some cases, eligibility may depend on specific criteria or requirements, such as the skills needed for a particular role or course brief.

3.6 All members of the college community are expected to treat others with dignity and respect, and everyone should feel able to be themselves within the college environment.

3.7 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is supported by strategic priorities set out in the annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report and informed by the college's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Access and Participation Plan (APP).

### **4. Responsibilities**

4.1 The college will:

- Take a zero-tolerance approach to incidents of abuse, harm and hate

- Value diversity and promote equal opportunities for all
  - Promote respect and positive relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - Meet legal obligations under equality legislation
  - Aim to meet the diverse needs of diverse groups and ensure freedom of speech while promoting shared values
  - Prevent unlawful discrimination and victimisation
  - Promote an inclusive and harmonious place of work and study where people respect others and where harassment and bullying, intimidation and violence are not tolerated
  - Take appropriate action where this policy is breached.
- 4.2 The Board of Governors has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that this policy is followed. Senior leaders and managers are responsible for implementing equality commitments within their areas of responsibility.
- 4.3 All members of the college community are expected to uphold the principles of this policy and contribute to a culture free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- 5. Safeguarding**
- 5.1 The College recognises that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion duties operate alongside statutory safeguarding responsibilities, including duties under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and PREVENT duty.
- 5.2 Where behaviour or expression creates a safeguarding concern, the College will respond in accordance with these statutory obligations, balancing its commitment to lawful freedom of speech with its duty to protect the college community.
- 6. Reporting Discrimination**
- 6.1 Members of the college community who believe they have experienced discrimination, harassment, victimization, bullying or any type of hate crime should report the incident as soon as possible.
- 6.2 Members of staff and visitors should report incidents to [hcapeople@hca.ac.uk](mailto:hcapeople@hca.ac.uk).
- 6.3 Students should report using the process outlined in pp.9-10 of HCA’s Bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct policy.
- 6.4 The college will take all reports seriously and investigate them in line with established procedures.
- 6.5 Incidents that may constitute hate crimes can also be reported to the police where appropriate.

## **7. Language and Terminology**

- 7.1 We recognise that language can reinforce prejudice or discrimination if used without care. Members of the college community are therefore expected to be mindful of the language they use in speech, writing and online communication.
- 7.2 While the college does not seek to prescribe language in every circumstance, individuals should remain respectful of others, including the use of preferred names and pronouns where appropriate.
- 7.3 These expectations apply in all contexts, including social media, teaching environments and public communications.

## **8. Academic Freedom**

- 8.1 The College recognises its duties under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and associated OfS conditions of registration. Lawful freedom of speech is protected, even where views expressed may be controversial or considered offensive by some.
- 8.2 Restrictions on speech will only apply where expression is unlawful, constitutes harassment under the Equality Act 2010, breaches safeguarding obligations, or poses a genuine risk to safety.

## **9. Advertising and Information**

- 9.1 The college will ensure that advertising, publications and communications relating to employment and student recruitment clearly reflect its commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 9.2 Language and imagery used in promotional materials will aim to be inclusive and free from discriminatory content. Information provided to applicants will clearly outline entry requirements and available support so that all individuals are able to make informed decisions.