



## **HL DESIGN CONSULTANCY LTD**

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

### **1.0 General Statement**

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all current and prospective employees and to meeting the various legal obligations in the equitable recruitment, selection, development, and remuneration of employees. Our aim is to make sure that all job applicants, staff, managers, and directors receive equal treatment regardless of age, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, part time worker or fixed-term employee status.

We believe that it is in both our best interests, and those of all who work with us, to ensure that the human resources, talents, and skills available throughout the community are considered when employment opportunities arise. To this end, within the framework of the law, we are committed, wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce which broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

We attach great importance to our equal opportunities policy which benefits both us and our employees. We remain committed to appointing, training, developing, and promoting employees on the basis of merit and ability only.

### **2.0 Forms of Discrimination**

The following are the kinds of discrimination which are against our policy:

- Direct discrimination, where a person is less favourably treated because of age, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, part time worker or fixed-term employee status.
- Indirect discrimination, where a requirement condition, provision, criterion, or practice which cannot be justified is applied equally to all groups but has the effect of disadvantaging a particular group.
- Victimization, where someone is treated less favourably than others because he or she has acted against an Employer in accordance with the relevant discrimination legislation.
- Harassment.

### **3.0 Recruitment and Promotion**

In staff employment we will ensure equality of opportunity for all persons. Vacancies will be advertised and made known as widely as practicable.

We will take steps to ensure that any advertising of vacancies is compatible with the equal opportunities policy and that all questions on any application forms are relevant and non-discriminatory.

We will take steps to ensure that individuals continue to be selected and promoted on merit only.

The Director involved in recruitment interviews will take an unbiased approach regardless of the applicant's age, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, part time worker or fixed-term employee status. They will ask only questions which relate to the job and avoid those which are discriminatory, or which might be perceived as such.

Job descriptions and person specifications should not require any unnecessary or inappropriate qualifications.

### **4.0 Terms and Conditions of Employment**

We are committed to practicing equality of opportunity in our terms and conditions of employment. Equal pay will always be given for work of equal value.

Where employees have particular cultural or religious needs, or disabilities which may conflict with existing work requirements we will always, wherever practicable, seek to vary our requirements to enable such needs to be met, e.g., reasonable adjustments, observance of prayer times, religious holidays.

### **5.0 Training**

We will not discriminate in the provision of training opportunities.

All our staff are aware that they should endeavour to create an atmosphere of equality within the office. All new employees will be informed of this policy at induction training.

### **6.0 Harassment**

Harassment is a form of direct discrimination. We recognise that harassment may cause problems at work and we will not tolerate it under any circumstances. Harassment can reduce our effectiveness by undermining the confidence of employees, creating a threatening environment, and increasing sickness, absence, and staff turnover.

Sexual harassment includes unwanted physical contact; suggestive remarks or behaviour; compromising invitations; demands for sexual favours and similar unwanted behaviour.

Other forms of harassment including any type of abuse or provocation deemed offensive by the recipient or conduct which has the effect of violating the recipient's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the recipient.

We prohibit the display of any offensive material, be it of a sexual nature or otherwise and will if necessary, where reported, we ensure that workstations are inspected, and offending material removed.

Harassment of any kind by any employee, or Partner, male or female, is not permitted or condoned by us and all employees, and Partners have a right to complain about such conduct. Employees should address such complaints in confidence to the Director and if necessary, invoke the grievance procedure.

## **7.0 Bullying**

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which, through the abuse or misuse of power, makes the recipient feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, and threatened. Power includes both personal strength and the power to coerce others through fear or intimidation. Bullying is often a form of harassment and can undermine an individual's self-confidence, competence, and self-esteem. As with harassment, bullying can take the form of physical, verbal, and non-verbal conduct. Physical conduct includes perceived horseplay, touching, pinching, and pushing as well as grabbing, shoving, punching and other forms of physical assault. In addition to the manner in which workers speak to and about one another, written material, and pictures (including that disseminated by interactive and digital technologies) can be used to bully. These include emails, text messages, film clips and photographs taken using cameras in mobile phones as well as content uploaded onto websites.

Bullying does not include legitimate and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour or reasonable requests made of workers.

Non exhaustive examples of bullying include:

- shouting at, being sarcastic towards, ridiculing or demeaning others;
- making physical or psychological threats;
- overbearing supervision and making inappropriate and/or derogatory remarks about a worker's performance;
- abuse of authority or power by those in positions of seniority;
- unjustifiably excluding colleagues from meetings/communications.

This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs both in the workplace itself and in settings outside the workplace, such as business trips, events or social functions organised for or on behalf of the Employer and on or off its premises.

If you believe you are being subjected to harassment or that you are being bullied, you should not hesitate to use the procedures set out below.

## **8.0 Breaches of this Policy**

Any grievance as a result of bullying or discrimination or harassment on the grounds of age, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, part time worker or fixed-term employee status will be taken very seriously.

If any employee believes that he or she or any other employee has been bullied, harassed, or discriminated against or otherwise treated unfairly on any of these grounds he or she should report the matter as soon as possible to the Director. If an employee does not wish to report the matter to the Director because they feel uncomfortable in doing so, then they may wish to engage with an external body / union to approach the director on their behalf. Upon receiving a complaint, the Director will conduct a full investigation and consultation with a view to establishing the facts and deciding what steps need to be taken, which may include disciplinary action.

Any allegations of bullying, discrimination or harassment of any kind will be dealt with seriously, expeditiously, and confidentially. All employees and Director will be protected against victimisation for bringing a bona fide complaint of harassment. Any member of staff who believes that he or she has been bullied, harassed, or discriminated against are encouraged to raise the matter as soon as possible so that we can take remedial action.

In addition, or as an alternative to a formal complaint, employees who are victims of minor harassment or bullying are advised to make it clear to their harasser that the behaviour is unacceptable and must stop. If an employee is unable to do this verbally then a written request (explaining the distress which the behaviour is causing) handed to the harasser or bully may be effective.

This policy applies equally to our relations with visitors, clients, customers, and suppliers and if, after investigation, employees are proven to have discriminated against or harassed a client or supplier you will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **9.0 Responsibility**

All Directors, managers and employees have personal responsibility for the practical application of this policy. You should note that, under the relevant legislation, Directors and employees are made personally liable for acts of discrimination committed by them and may be liable to pay the victim compensation.

Ensuring Equal Opportunities requires much more than a formal statement. This policy is intended to help create the necessary conditions for success but all of us as individuals must contribute. This policy will be brought to the attention of everyone, and we shall keep it under regular review.