

## 1. Definition

'The system must be fair and equal to ensure that wherever possible all learners with the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding can have their achievement recognised'.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Audience

2.1 The intended audience for this document is:

- NOCN staff and trustees.
- OCN staff and trustees,
- Centre staff responsible for Curriculum Development and Quality Assurance.
- Quality Reviewers.
- Key stakeholders involved in the development of NOCN provision.
- Trainers working on behalf of NOCN.
- Contractors working on the development of materials published on behalf of NOCN.
- Qualifications Regulators.

2.2 This policy applies to:

- Units and qualifications approved under the QCF including support and assessment methodologies and materials.
- Units approved by Open College Networks.
- Centre Recognition processes.
- Publicity and marketing materials.
- Professional development events run by and/or on behalf of NOCN.

## 3. Introduction

3.1 NOCN is committed to being an equal opportunities organisation and is opposed to discrimination on any grounds, including those of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, religion and beliefs, disability or any other ground or status.

3.2 NOCN will work with organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to develop good practice in the creation of additional educational opportunities for groups currently under-represented. Positive action strategies will include the promotion of good practice in educational provision.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework – August 2008, p7

## 4. Policy

4.1 NOCN will ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted in access to our products and services and that unfair or unlawful discrimination, whether direct or indirect is eliminated.

4.2 NOCN will ensure that:

- The widest possible diversity of learners can access the content and assessment of our products and services.
- Representatives of learners will be involved in the development of units and qualifications to ensure that barriers to entry or participation are mitigated.
- Access to equality of opportunity in assessment is expressed within the NOCN access to fair assessment policy.
- Information regarding the application of reasonable adjustments is recorded, monitored and used to inform future developments.
- Entry requirements, content and assessment demands of units and qualifications will be appropriate to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified and will not act as unnecessary barriers to achievement.
- Language used in all materials will be clear, free from bias and appropriate to the target group.
- Quality Reviewers are trained to identify issues relating to equality and diversity especially in the application of assessment, and equal opportunities issues are embedded within the training provided for assessors and internal verifiers.
- Quality Review and Business Development meetings provide an opportunity for dialogue with centres on ways to enhance curriculum, resources and assessment practice in line with both NOCN and the centre's own equal opportunities policy.
- Published and/or endorsed materials reflect the equality and diversity policy.
- All products and services are reviewed against this policy.

Sufficient data is collected periodically to monitor and evaluate its performance against its goal of providing equality of opportunity for all learners and will take reasonable and practical steps to address inequalities and barriers to entry.

## Recognised NOCN Centres

Recognised centres will be required to:

- Ensure that all processes concerned with assessment are carried out in a fair and objective manner.
- Adhere to legislation regarding equality and diversity.
- Operate an effective equality and diversity policy, which is readily available to learners and which is applied to all learners using NOCN products and services.
- Operate an effective appeals procedure, which is readily available to learners and which is applied to all learners using NOCN products and services.

## 5. Related Documents

This Equality and Diversity Policy should be read in conjunction with the Access to Fair Assessment Policy and Procedure.

## 6. Policy Responsibility and Review

NOCN will review the policy biennially and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer and stakeholder feedback, changes in practice, requirements of the Qualifications Regulators or external agencies or changes in legislation. The review will ensure that procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied properly and fairly.