



QAHE Limited Equality and Diversity Policy for QA Higher Education Applicants and Students

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Prepared for: QA Higher Education

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Version Control

Document Information	
V1.0	Original draft of the Equality and Diversity Policy for Students. Circulated for consultation but not formally approved by QAHE governance. Superseded by Version 1.1 (October 2025).
V1.1	This Equality and Diversity Policy for Students replaces Version 1.0 (September 2025). It reflects QA Higher Education's ongoing commitment to promoting inclusivity, fairness, and respect in line with the Equality Act 2010, the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration (C1 and E2), and QAHE's core values. T

Document Approval		
Name	Position	Viewed / Comments
		Approved
		Approved

Revision History			
Version	Issue Date	Author	Description of Change
V1.0	Sept 25	L Walsh	Initial release – new policy establishing QAHE's framework for promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion for all students. This did not receive final approval
V1.1	March 26	L Walsh	Comprehensive revision to enhance compliance with Equality Act 2010 and OfS Conditions; updated protected characteristic sections; inclusion of Equality Impact Assessment



Contents

1. Policy Statement	4
2. Alignment with QA Higher Education Values and Strategy	4
3. Scope	4
4. Legal and Policy Framework	4
5. Protected Characteristics.....	5
5.1. Age	5
5.2. Disability.....	5
5.3. Gender reassignment.....	5
5.4. Marriage and Civil Partnership.....	6
5.5. Pregnancy and Maternity	6
5.6. Race.....	6
5.7. Religion or Belief.....	6
5.8. Sex.....	7
5.9. Sexual Orientation	7
6. Responsibilities	7
7. Reporting	7
8. Monitoring, Data and Transparency	8
9. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).....	8
10. Review and continuous improvement	8



1. Policy Statement

QAHE Limited (QA Higher Education) is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all students. We take a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, bullying, sexual misconduct, and victimisation.

This policy sets out Q QA Higher Education's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and confirms that no student or applicant will be treated less favourably on the basis of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 or any other personal attribute unrelated to academic merit.

QA Higher Education promotes equality of opportunity across the entire student journey, from application and enrolment through to study, progression, and graduation. In line with the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration, we actively seek to identify and remove barriers to access, participation, and student success.

Through this policy, QA Higher Education aims to promote fairness, support inclusive practice, and ensure that all members of the community are treated with dignity and respect.

2. Alignment with QA Higher Education Values and Strategy

Our values underpin this policy:

- **Integrity:** acting honestly, ethically, and responsibly in all academic and social interactions.
- **Respect:** treating others with dignity, courtesy, and kindness, regardless of difference.
- **Inclusivity:** recognising and valuing diversity, ensuring that everyone feels welcome and supported.
- **Excellence:** striving for the highest standards of academic and professional achievement while supporting others to succeed.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives are embedded in QA Higher Education's strategic plan and monitored through its governance frameworks.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All applicants and students studying at QA Higher Education campuses
- Student behaviour on campus, in online spaces, in the local community, on placements, or during activities where they represent QA Higher Education.

It also extends to QA Higher Education's partner university arrangements to ensure alignment in student experience.

Equality and Diversity Policy for QA Higher Educations Students V1.1



4. Legal and Policy Framework

QA Higher Education operates in accordance with:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Partner university regulations and codes of conduct.
- QAHE Respect for All – Student Disciplinary Policy (2025)
- QAHE Disability Policy
- QAHE Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- QAHE Safeguarding Policy
- QAHE Fitness to Study Policy
- QAHE Prevention of Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Abuse Policy

5. Protected Characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010, students are protected from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the basis of the following characteristics.

QA Higher Education is committed not only to meeting its legal obligations but to creating a genuinely inclusive and equitable learning environment where every student can thrive.

Protection applies to all applicants and students, across all stages of the student lifecycle, from application and admission through study, assessment, and graduation.

5.1. Age

QA Higher Education is committed to ensuring that individuals of all ages are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. We will promote an inclusive environment where opportunities for employment, development, and progression are available to everyone regardless of age. We will also challenge stereotypes or assumptions about both younger and older individuals and ensure decisions are based on merit and capability.

5.2. Disability

QA Higher Education is committed to creating an accessible environment for disabled people. We will make reasonable adjustments where required to enable individuals to access our services, facilities, and employment opportunities. Where a requested adjustment cannot reasonably be implemented, we will work with the individual to explore suitable alternatives.

We actively challenge misconceptions about disability and aim to improve access to information and services through accessible formats, assistive technologies, and inclusive communication methods. Individuals are encouraged to inform us if they have a disability or develop one during their time with us so that appropriate support can be provided.

We will also regularly review the accessibility of our physical and digital environments to ensure that they do not place disabled individuals at a disadvantage, taking reasonable steps to improve access where needed.



5.3. Gender reassignment

Meaning: Protects people who are transitioning, have transitioned, or are perceived to be transgender or non-binary. Protection applies whether or not medical treatment is undertaken.

Examples of discrimination:

- Consistently using the wrong pronouns for a student despite correction.
- Excluding a trans student from appropriate facilities.

How we support:

- Respecting chosen names and pronouns in all systems and communications.
- A commitment to ensure that applicants and students will not be disadvantaged during application, admission, or study because of gender identity or transition status.
- Ensuring confidentiality in record-keeping and communication.
- Providing gender-neutral facilities wherever possible.
- Offering guidance and support through the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team.

5.4. Marriage and Civil Partnership

QA Higher Education will ensure that individuals are treated fairly and respectfully regardless of their marital or civil partnership status. Discriminatory assumptions about relationships will be challenged, and no individual will be disadvantaged because they are married or in a civil partnership.

5.5. Pregnancy and Maternity

QA Higher Education is committed to supporting individuals during pregnancy, maternity leave, and the return to work or study. We will ensure that individuals are treated with dignity and respect and are not disadvantaged because of pregnancy or maternity.

Appropriate support and flexibility will be provided where required to ensure that individuals are able to continue to participate in work or study wherever possible.

5.6. Race

QA Higher Education does not tolerate racism or racial discrimination in any form. We will address incidents of racism promptly and sensitively and ensure that appropriate action is taken where necessary.

We are committed to promoting racial equality and inclusion across the organisation, ensuring fair access to services, employment, training, development, and opportunities. We will also work proactively to challenge discriminatory attitudes and practices and promote a culture where diversity is respected and valued.



5.7. Religion or Belief

QA Higher Education respects the diverse religious and philosophical beliefs of its community. We will seek to accommodate religious observance and practices where reasonably possible and promote an environment where individuals can express their beliefs respectfully.

At the same time, we will ensure that the expression of beliefs does not infringe on the rights, dignity, or wellbeing of others.

5.8. Sex

QA Higher Education is committed to promoting gender equality and challenging gender-based discrimination or stereotypes. We will ensure that individuals have equal access to opportunities, representation, development, and progression regardless of gender.

We also recognise the importance of supporting transgender individuals and those undergoing gender reassignment and will take appropriate steps to ensure they are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.

5.9. Sexual Orientation

QA Higher Education is committed to creating an environment where individuals of all sexual orientations feel safe, respected, and included. We will challenge prejudice and discrimination affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other LGBTQ+ communities and promote positive representation and awareness.

We will ensure that individuals are treated fairly and have equal access to services, employment opportunities, and development regardless of sexual orientation.

6. Responsibilities

Students are expected to:

Treat peers, staff, and visitors with dignity and respect.

Familiarise themselves with this policy and the Respect for All framework.

Report discrimination, harassment, or bullying through official channels.

Staff are expected to:

Model inclusive behaviour in teaching, assessment, and student support.

Make reasonable adjustments to ensure accessibility.

Intervene and report if they witness harassment or discrimination.

QA Higher Education Leadership is responsible for:

Embedding equality and diversity across teaching, policy, and governance.

Monitoring and reviewing outcomes to remove barriers to success.

Ensuring policies align with legislative and partner university requirements.

7. Reporting

Any student who experiences or witnesses behaviour that breaches this policy should report it using QA Higher Education's [Your Safe Space: Report + Support](#) or by contacting the Safeguarding, Wellbeing team qahe.welfare@qa.com.



Reports will be investigated in line with the Respect for All Policy and, where relevant, other QA Higher Education policies such as the Prevention of Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Abuse Policy.

8. Monitoring, Data and Transparency

- QA Higher Education collects and analyses data on student access, retention, progression, and attainment, disaggregated by protected and wider characteristics.
- Where disparities are identified, targeted actions are implemented to promote fairness and inclusion.
- Data and progress are shared with students, staff, and partner universities to ensure transparency and accountability.

9. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

QA Higher Education is committed to ensuring that this policy is implemented fairly, consistently, and without discrimination. In developing this policy, QA Higher Education has considered its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and its wider commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and inclusion for all students.

QA Higher Education recognises that students may have different experiences and needs based on their protected characteristics, including age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership. The policy has therefore been designed to ensure that no student is disadvantaged on the basis of these characteristics, and that appropriate support and reasonable adjustments are provided where required.

QA Higher Education also recognises that equality of opportunity extends beyond protected characteristics. Factors such as socio-economic background, caring responsibilities, and being the first in a family to attend higher education may also affect students' experiences. QAHE will therefore continue to monitor the impact of this policy to ensure it supports inclusive practice and equitable outcomes for all students.

The implementation of this policy will be monitored through QA Higher Education's equality, diversity, and inclusion governance processes to identify any unintended barriers or adverse impacts. Where issues are identified, appropriate actions will be taken to ensure the policy continues to promote fairness, accessibility, and inclusion across the QA Higher Education community.

10. Review and continuous improvement

This policy will be reviewed annually by QA Higher Education's Safeguarding, Student Life, and Wellbeing Team.

Reviews will ensure ongoing compliance with legislation, the Office for Students' conditions of registration, and partner university expectations.

