


## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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## Introduction

International College of Contemporary Sciences ICCS is committed to providing a learning and working environment in which equality, diversity and inclusion are integral to the culture and practice of the institution. The college recognises that its students, staff and partners bring a rich variety of backgrounds, identities and experiences and that this diversity is a source of strength, creativity and innovation. ICCS therefore seeks to cultivate an environment in which everyone feels respected, valued and able to participate fully in academic and professional life, free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy articulates how ICCS understands and discharges its responsibilities under equality and human rights legislation and how it embeds inclusive principles into its strategies, policies and daily activities. It sets out the scope and aims of the policy, describes key concepts, clarifies roles and responsibilities and explains how equality, diversity and inclusion are reflected in areas such as curriculum design, teaching and assessment, student support and employment practices. The policy should be read in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy, the Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy, the Complaints Policy and Procedures and relevant human resources policies, which together form the core of the ICCS equality framework.

## Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and coherent framework for advancing equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and promoting inclusion across all aspects of ICCS activity. It signals to students, staff, applicants and external stakeholders that ICCS is proactive in identifying and addressing barriers to participation and success and that it is committed to continual learning and improvement in this area. The policy establishes expectations for behaviour and decision making, informs the design of procedures and action plans and provides a reference point for monitoring progress and accountability at institutional and local levels.

The main aims of the policy are to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and to foster good relations between different groups. In practice this involves taking steps to remove or minimise disadvantages, meeting the specific needs of individuals and groups where it is reasonable to do so and encouraging greater participation in areas where representation is low. The policy aims

to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion considerations inform strategic planning, curriculum development, student support, staff recruitment and progression and that evidence is used systematically to guide decisions and to evaluate impact.

## **Legal and Regulatory Context**

ICCS operates within a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework that shapes its responsibilities in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. Central to this framework is the Equality Act 2010, which identifies protected characteristics and prohibits discrimination, harassment and victimisation in education and employment. The Act also places a public sector equality duty on relevant bodies, requiring them to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the exercise of their functions. Although ICCS is a private provider, it aligns its practices with the spirit of this duty as part of its commitment to responsible and ethical governance.

The college also has regard to the Human Rights Act, which reinforces fundamental rights such as respect for private and family life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of expression, and to data protection legislation, which governs the collection, use and storage of personal information relating to identity and characteristics. In addition, ICCS takes account of expectations and guidance from bodies such as the Office for Students, the Department for Education and Ofqual in relation to access, participation, outcomes and inclusive practice. The policy is further informed by sector reference points, including resources produced by Jisc and other agencies on digital accessibility and inclusive curriculum design. ICCS will keep this policy under review to ensure alignment with evolving legislation, regulation and recognised good practice.

## **Definitions and Key Concepts**

Within this policy equality refers to equality of opportunity, meaning that access to learning, employment and services is based on relevant merit and potential and not constrained by irrelevant or discriminatory factors. Diversity describes the range of visible and non visible differences between individuals, including protected characteristics and other aspects such as socio economic background, educational history, family responsibilities, faith, language and cultural experience. Inclusion denotes the active creation of conditions in which different people feel respected, involved and able to contribute fully, rather than simply being present within the institution.

The policy uses the terminology of protected characteristics as set out in equality legislation, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership,

pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It distinguishes between direct discrimination, where a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic, and indirect discrimination, where a provision or practice that appears neutral places people who share a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage without objective justification. It also recognises harassment, which involves unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person dignity or creating an intimidating or hostile environment, and victimisation, which occurs when someone is treated less favourably because they have raised or supported a concern about discrimination.

## Scope

This policy applies to all aspects of ICCS operations, including governance, strategic planning, academic provision, student support, staff employment, procurement and partnership working. It extends to all members of the ICCS community and to others who engage with the college, including applicants, students, apprentices, alumni, staff, agency workers, contractors, visiting lecturers, examiners, partners and visitors. The policy applies to activities conducted on ICCS premises, at partner or placement sites and through online or blended learning platforms under ICCS control or oversight.

Where ICCS collaborates with other institutions, placement providers or contractors, the college will seek to ensure that agreements include appropriate provisions relating to equality, diversity and inclusion and that there is clarity about how concerns will be raised and addressed. While ICCS cannot dictate the internal policies of external organisations, it will expect partners to uphold comparable standards and will be prepared to review or, where necessary, adjust relationships if serious or persistent equality concerns arise. This policy does not replace more specific procedures, such as complaints, appeals or disciplinary processes, but operates alongside them and informs their application.

## Principles

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is underpinned by a set of principles that guide behaviour and decision making across ICCS. These include respect for the inherent dignity and equal worth of all individuals, a commitment to fairness and transparency in processes, and recognition that a diverse and inclusive community enhances intellectual challenge, creativity and the quality of learning and teaching. The policy affirms that equality is not only a matter of legal compliance but a core component of educational excellence and institutional reputation, and that inclusion requires sustained, reflective effort rather than reliance on isolated initiatives.

The policy is also based on the principle that responsibilities for equality, diversity and inclusion are shared. While senior leaders and governing bodies have particular duties to set direction and allocate resources, all members of the community contribute to the culture of ICCS through their everyday interactions and choices. The college expects students and staff to treat one another with courtesy and respect, to challenge discriminatory language and behaviour where it is safe and appropriate to do so, and to use established procedures to raise concerns. ICCS, in turn, undertakes to listen to those concerns, to respond proportionately and to protect individuals from victimisation for speaking up.

### **Governance, Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body is ultimately responsible for overseeing equality, diversity and inclusion within ICCS and for assuring itself that the college is meeting its legal and regulatory obligations and its own strategic objectives in this area. The Principal and senior leadership team provide visible leadership and are accountable for integrating equality considerations into institutional strategies, risk management, resource allocation and quality assurance processes. They may designate a senior lead for equality, diversity and inclusion to coordinate activity, champion good practice and report on progress.

Managers and academic leaders have responsibility for implementing this policy within their areas, including ensuring that local procedures are fair, transparent and inclusive, that staff are aware of their responsibilities and that equality impacts are considered when changes are proposed. Human resources, student support and quality assurance teams provide specialist advice and maintain relevant data, policies and training. All staff and students share responsibility for familiarising themselves with this policy, for contributing to a respectful culture and for engaging constructively with equality initiatives and consultations. Contractors, agents and partners are expected to act in ways that are consistent with ICCS equality expectations when representing or working with the college.

### **Inclusive Culture, Behaviour and Wellbeing**

ICCS seeks to foster a culture in which all members of the community feel that they belong and can participate on an equal basis. This involves promoting positive behaviours and norms, challenging stereotypes and prejudices and addressing harassment, bullying and exclusionary conduct wherever they arise. Codes of conduct, student and staff handbooks and induction programmes will articulate expected standards of behaviour and will emphasise that discriminatory or degrading treatment of

others is unacceptable. The college recognises that microaggressions and subtle forms of bias can be as damaging as overt acts and will encourage reflection and dialogue to address them.

The college also recognises the close relationship between inclusion, wellbeing and mental health. ICCS will therefore seek to ensure that wellbeing services are accessible and responsive to the needs of a diverse community and that support is available for those who may experience isolation, discrimination or other challenges linked to identity or background. Policies and practices relating to workload, timetabling, flexible working and study support will take account of wellbeing considerations, and staff and students will be encouraged to make constructive use of support services. Feedback mechanisms will be used to understand how inclusive the culture feels in practice and to identify areas where further action is needed.

### **Inclusive Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

ICCS aims to design curricula that reflect the diversity of contemporary society and that incorporate a range of perspectives, sources and examples, enabling students to engage critically with issues of equality, power and representation where these are relevant to their discipline. Programme teams are encouraged to consider whose voices and experiences are included or excluded in reading lists, case studies and learning activities, and to make thoughtful adjustments that enhance relevance and inclusivity without compromising academic rigour. Learning materials and digital resources will be developed and presented in accessible formats as far as is reasonably practicable, taking account of guidance on inclusive design and digital accessibility.

Teaching, learning and assessment methods will be designed to support the success of a diverse student body, making use of different approaches and opportunities for engagement. Assessment strategies will enable students to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes through a variety of means, and reasonable adjustments will be provided for disabled students in accordance with the Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy, without lowering academic or professional standards. Staff involved in learning and teaching will be supported through professional development to enhance their confidence and competence in inclusive pedagogy, including the effective use of technology and the management of sensitive or controversial topics in the classroom.

### **Access, Participation and Student Success**

Advancing equality at ICCS involves active attention to patterns of access, participation and success across different student groups. The college will monitor data on



applications, offers, enrolment, retention, attainment and progression by relevant characteristics, recognising that some groups may face structural barriers to participation or may experience differential outcomes. This analysis will inform strategies to widen access, to support transition into and through study, and to close unjustified gaps in success rates. Outreach, marketing and recruitment activities will be designed to reach a broad range of prospective students and will present accurate and inclusive information about ICCS provision.

Within programmes, ICCS will seek to ensure that all students have equitable access to learning opportunities, resources, placements and co curricular activities. Targeted support or mentoring schemes may be developed where evidence suggests that particular groups would benefit from additional help, and student voices will be sought and valued in understanding barriers and co creating solutions. Actions to promote access and success will be developed and implemented in alignment with relevant regulatory requirements and will be evaluated for impact, with findings reported through governance structures and used to refine future plans.

## **Workforce Equality and Inclusive Employment Practices**

ICCS recognises that its capacity to provide high quality education and support depends on attracting, retaining and developing a diverse and talented workforce. Human resources policies and procedures will therefore be designed to promote fairness and equality across the employment cycle, from recruitment and selection through induction, development, promotion and, where relevant, exit processes. Job descriptions and person specifications will focus on genuine requirements, recruitment panels will be trained in fair selection practices and appointments will be made on the basis of merit and evidence. Where appropriate, positive action measures permitted by equality legislation may be considered to address under representation.

The college will monitor workforce data, including representation at different grades and in different functions, pay and reward structures and participation in development opportunities, in order to identify patterns and potential inequalities. Where issues are identified, proportionate action will be considered, which may include targeted development programmes, review of criteria and processes or adjustments to working arrangements. ICCS will support flexible working and family friendly policies where operationally feasible and will take reasonable steps to accommodate the needs of staff with disabilities or health conditions. Staff will be encouraged to contribute to equality and inclusion initiatives and to participate in networks or forums that support shared learning and mutual support.

## **Data, Monitoring and Reporting**

Monitoring and analysis of data are central to understanding how effectively ICCS is progressing equality, diversity and inclusion objectives. The college will collect and analyse data on students and staff, including where individuals choose to share information about protected characteristics and other relevant factors, in order to identify trends in access, attainment, progression, satisfaction and employment outcomes. Data will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements, with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality and for the responsible use of statistics, particularly in relation to small groups.

Findings from data analysis will be reported to relevant committees and management groups at agreed intervals and will inform strategic planning, risk management and the development of action plans. Where significant disparities or concerns are identified, ICCS will investigate potential causes and consider a range of possible responses, which may include changes to policy, practice, communication or support. Aggregated and anonymised data, together with narrative analysis, may be shared with students, staff and external stakeholders as appropriate, in order to promote transparency and engagement. ICCS will also draw on external benchmarks and sector wide evidence where this is available.

## **Training, Awareness and Engagement**

ICCS recognises that policies alone cannot achieve equality and inclusion and that staff and students need opportunities to build understanding, skills and confidence in this area. The college will therefore provide training and development on equality, diversity and inclusion themes, tailored to different roles and responsibilities. For staff this may include induction sessions, online modules and workshops on topics such as legal duties, unconscious bias, inclusive curriculum design and responding to disclosures of harassment or discrimination. Managers and those involved in recruitment, admissions or decision making about student progress will receive additional guidance to support fair and consistent practice.

Students will be introduced to equality and inclusion expectations during induction and through ongoing engagement activities, including student representation structures and co curricular events. ICCS will seek to create forums where members of the community can share experiences, raise concerns and contribute ideas for improvement. Collaboration with student representatives, staff networks and external partners will be encouraged in order to enrich understanding and to ensure that initiatives are relevant and impactful. Communication about equality work, including successes and challenges, will be regular and open, reinforcing that inclusion is a collective endeavour.



## **Raising Concerns, Complaints and Whistleblowing**

ICCS encourages anyone who experiences or witnesses behaviour that appears to contravene this policy to raise their concerns so that they can be addressed. Some issues may be resolved informally through discussion, clarification or mediation, and the college will support informal approaches where they are appropriate and safe. However, ICCS recognises that informal resolution is not always sufficient or desirable and provides formal routes for raising concerns, including the Complaints Policy and Procedures for students and visitors and relevant grievance or whistleblowing arrangements for staff and others. These procedures explain how concerns will be considered and what outcomes may be available.

Those who bring forward concerns in good faith will be treated with respect and will not be disadvantaged or victimised for doing so, even if their concern is not ultimately upheld, and individuals who are the subject of allegations will also be treated fairly and given an opportunity to respond. ICCS will handle cases sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially, sharing information only with those who need it to investigate and respond. Where investigations substantiate that discrimination, harassment or other breaches of this policy have occurred, appropriate action will be taken under disciplinary or other procedures, and learning from cases will be used to strengthen systems and culture.

## **Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement**

The effectiveness of this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be monitored through a combination of quantitative data, qualitative feedback, case analysis and external review. Relevant committees will receive regular reports summarising progress against equality objectives, trends in student and staff outcomes, utilisation of complaints and appeals routes in relation to equality issues and findings from surveys, focus groups or audits. This information will be used to identify areas where progress is being made, where challenges persist and where additional focus or resource may be needed.

The policy will normally be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner where there are significant changes in legislation, regulation or institutional context, or where monitoring indicates that revisions are necessary to improve clarity or effectiveness. Revisions will be developed in consultation with staff, students and other stakeholders as appropriate and will be approved through established ICCS governance processes. The overarching aim is to ensure that the policy remains a living document that supports sustained and meaningful advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion and that it continues to reflect ICCS values and strategic priorities.

## References

- Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations.
- Human Rights Act 1998, in so far as it relates to dignity, respect and non discrimination.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation UK GDPR.
- Guidance from the Office for Students on equality of opportunity, access and participation.
- Relevant guidance from the Department for Education and Ofqual on inclusive education and support for disabled students.
- Recognised sector guidance on inclusive curriculum design, digital accessibility and student support, including materials published by Jisc and other sector bodies.

