

# Mary Ward Centre

## Equality and Diversity at the Mary Ward Centre

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### Introduction

This document contains the equality and diversity policy of the Mary Ward Centre. We hope that it is written in an accessible manner so that it can be easily understood by all of our stakeholders, students, staff and funders, and by prospective students and members of the public.

The policy is available on our web site, <http://www.marywardcentre.ac.uk>, following the links About the College/Equality and Diversity. At present, you will also be able to access the Centre's Student Profile and the Centre's Student Charter. It is our intention to make available all policy documents which have a bearing on equality and diversity on our web site using the About the College/Equality and Diversity links. We shall also make available a document which encapsulates equality and diversity at the Centre in the form of a "quick read" document.

**If you require this document or a part of it, or any other information document, in another format such as larger type, Braille, audio, digital, or in another language, please ask.**

This document replaces our Single Equality Policy, and takes account of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. The equality and diversity policy was agreed by a sub-group of the board of trustees in August 2013.

### Equality and Diversity at the Mary Ward Centre defined

At the Mary Ward Centre, equality and diversity is central to the creation of a fair organisation where everybody can take part and fulfil their potential free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. It is about advancing equality of opportunity to all.

Diversity is about respecting, valuing and celebrating all people as individuals. It is also about fostering good relations among diverse groups of people.

At the Mary Ward Centre, equality and diversity has a long history, dating from our foundation by Mrs Humphrey Ward (Mary Ward), and her idea of "equalisation". That term was her nineteenth-century description of opportunities for all, a direct antecedent of the modern ideas of equality and diversity.

### Our equality and diversity policy

Our overarching policy objectives are to ensure:

- that our courses are accessible to the general public
- that all our students receive all the support they might need in order to complete their courses successfully
- that equality and diversity is embedded across all of our functions

The policy will be made available to the general public, and published on our website. It is designed to meet our statutory obligations, and is for the benefit of our students and staff, including prospective students and staff. It aims to support us to be an outstanding college, advancing equality and diversity across all of our functions. These include:

- curriculum and curriculum planning
- teaching, learning, assessment and accreditation
- employment practices
- student services, and information, advice and guidance
- additional learning support
- staff appraisal and observation of teaching and learning
- marketing and publications, including staff recruitment and student admissions, and making all publications in accessible formats upon application
- estates management
- decision making, budget setting, budget management and the allocation of resources
- self-assessment and other quality improvement activities
- partnerships, procurement and contracted-out services
- other activities, including membership events, student events, and enrichment activities, including trips and visits

In order to ensure that equality and diversity rights and duties apply to all of our functions, all decisions will be subject to an equality and diversity impact assessment.

The college's leadership and management will:

- advance equality and diversity so that differences are respected and valued
- treat people fairly with respect and dignity
- strive for the elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation

Facilities and resources will be, as far as is reasonably practicable:

- safe
- fit for purpose
- accessible to all

Our curriculum will be inclusive:

- that is accessible to all who meet any appropriate entry requirements
- where the diversity of our community and the student body is reflected and valued
- where students are appropriately supported

We will take all steps necessary to ensure that students have a learning experience:

- that is inclusive, free from discrimination, stimulating and satisfying
- where the diverse needs of our students are, where possible anticipated, understood and embedded in teaching to enhance participation and performance
- that supports equality of outcomes
- that takes account of people's impairments in the form of reasonable adjustments

We will take all steps necessary to ensure that we have a workplace and human resources management:

- that is inclusive, free from discrimination, stimulating and satisfying
- where the working environment is flexible, fair and supportive
- where the diversity of our workforce is valued
- where the diverse needs of employees are, where possible anticipated, understood and actioned
- that takes account of people's impairments in the form of reasonable adjustments

We will put in place programmes of induction and training for our board of trustees and all our staff, so that:

- they are aware of the equality and diversity goals of the Centre
- they are familiar with the equality and diversity rights and duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010
- they are equipped to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations
- they have the skills to embed the principles of equality and diversity across all our functions

We are committed to a programme of widening participation, in which the Centre will work in its own right, and with partnership organisations, to increase the participation in education, of groups within society that are under-represented.

We will involve students and staff in advancing our equality and diversity aims and objectives by:

- inviting individual feedback from students and staff, individually and at student and staff meetings and events
- by including relevant questions in student satisfaction surveys

We will gladly receive submissions and observations for our consideration from members of the public, interest groups and local and national support and representative organisations for people who share protected characteristics.

We welcome observations and criticism of the policy from local and national government and government agencies charged with advancing the general and specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

Our management information systems will record appropriate data on the protected characteristics for both the student and staff bodies. The data will be used to inform the Centre's annual self-assessment report (SAR) and the Centre's annual human resources review. This, in turn, will inform our planning and decision-making processes, including the setting of our equality and diversity objectives, which will be included in our Equality and Diversity Annual Report.

### **Other policies**

The Centre's Additional Learning Support policy and the Student Support Funds policy fall entirely within the ambit equality and diversity, and as such form part of the Equality and Diversity Policy. In addition, it is our aim that equality and diversity be embedded within all the functions of the Mary Ward Centre. Therefore, all the Centre's policies will be reviewed via an equality and diversity impact assessment.

### **Additional Learning Support Policy**

It is the duty of the Mary Ward Centre to support students with disabilities and learning difficulties, and to make reasonable adjustment in accordance with their needs. It is through the Centre's Additional Learning Support system that these students will be supported. Learning Support will be put in place on a case-by-case basis, and in accordance with the Skills Funding Agency funding guidance as issued from time to time.

### **Student Support Funds**

The Mary Ward Centre receives a funding allocation for discretionary learner support from the Skills Funding Agency, together with 24+ Advanced Learning Loans bursary. In addition, we have established a Mary Ward Centre bursary fund, funded from donations, and for which we seek funds from other sources, for example the Royal Female School of Art. From these monies, the Centre is able to offer grants to students to cover, inter alia, travel from home to college, course books and materials, examination fees and course fees. There is an application process and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the financial needs of the student. Grants from the funding allocation for discretionary learner support provided by the Skills Funding Agency and the 24+ Advanced Learning Loans bursary are subject to the Skills Funding Agency funding guidance as issued from time to time.

## **Duties and responsibilities**

All stakeholders of the Mary Ward Centre, members of the Centre, students, staff, trustees and visitors have both rights and responsibilities in respect of equality and diversity across the organisation. Together, they have responsibilities to ensure that unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation are eliminated, that equality of opportunity is advanced and that good relations are fostered.

Our board of trustees, whose membership includes members elected by both the student and staff bodies, is responsible for strategic policies and has a duty of oversight over all our functions. Within the context of equality and diversity, the board also has a responsibility to monitor quality and standards. The board will approve the Equality and Diversity policy and will receive the Equality and Diversity Annual Report. The board is responsible for the induction and training of their fellow members in meeting the general and specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

The Warden has the responsibility to lead on equality and diversity and to ensure that the Centre is legally compliant. The Warden has the responsibility for setting equality and diversity strategy, promoting best practice across the organisation, and maximising quality. The Warden also leads on human resources management, management information systems, and facilities and resources. In these roles, the Warden is assisted by the other members of the senior management team, the Head of Adult and Community Learning and the Head of Finance and Resources. The senior management team is responsible for the induction and training of Heads of Department in meeting the general and specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

The Heads of Department have a duty to advance equality and diversity within their curriculum programme areas, including managing curriculum content, ensuring that programme planning is inclusive, maximising access, promoting inclusive teaching and learning, and making reasonable adjustments for students and staff members who require them. Heads of Department are responsible for the induction and training of the staff in their departments, including teaching staff, in meeting the general and specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

The Head of Adult and Community Learning is responsible for putting in place the cross-college systems and procedures relating to Student Support Funds.

The Equality and Diversity Manager is responsible for putting in place, and operating the cross-college systems and procedures relating to students who fall within the protected characteristics cited by the Equality Act 2010, and to assist with similar systems and procedures relating to the staff body. The Equality and Diversity Manager is also responsible for the systems and procedures that take account of people's impairments in the form of Additional Learning Support. The foregoing systems and procedures also exist to inform and advise the board of trustees, the Warden, the senior management team, the heads of department, and other staff.

All staff, including teaching staff, student services staff and all other staff have a responsibility to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Members of the student body have the same responsibilities. Any member of staff or a student found to be acting in breach of this policy may be subject to our staff or student disciplinary procedures as appropriate.

## **Policy guidance documents**

A document entitled Policy Guidance on Equality and Diversity will be published, together with equality and diversity impact assessment notes, covering all the functions of the Centre. Its purpose will be to assist the board of trustees and all staff in meeting the general and specific duties of the Equality Act 2010. It is designed to assist the board of trustees and all staff in seeking to implement our overarching policy objectives:

- to ensure that our courses are accessible to the general public
- that all our students receive all the support they might need in order to complete their courses successfully
- that equality and diversity is embedded across all of our functions

## APPENDIX

### “The legal stuff”

The Mary Ward Centre is a public body. It is a Specially Designated Institution under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, and as such is legally defined as a further education college. We receive a major part of our income from the Skills Funding Agency. Another major source of income is course fees paid by students and employers.

As a public body, the Mary Ward Centre, has a specific duty to publish equality and diversity information annually, and equality objectives to be published every four years, under the Equality Act 2010. Equality and diversity information is published in this document and in our Equality and Diversity Annual Report. Both documents together contain details of our equality and diversity aims and achievements. The Equality and Diversity Annual Report contains, inter alia:

- the Centre’s annual self-assessment report (SAR)
- the Centre’s Student Profile
- the Centre’s annual human resources review
- equality analyses and equality impact assessments
- the equality and diversity objectives set by the Centre and a review of progress

The Equality Act 2010 is the legal framework in which we work in respect of equality and diversity. In April 2011, a new public sector quality duty, known as the general duty, came into force. It applies to the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act. Public bodies, like the Mary Ward Centre, have a duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

The term, advance, also includes the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantage experienced by people who share a protected characteristic (see below)
- Take steps to meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic
- Take steps to take account of people’s impairments
- Encourage people with a protected characteristic to participate in public life or other activities where participation is disproportionately low

The term, foster, involves tackling prejudice. It also includes promoting understanding among different groups.

Two specific duties came into force in September 2011:

- To publish equality information by 31 January 2012 and then annually
- To publish equality objective by 6 April 2012 and then every 4 years

There are nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act:

- Race
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion and belief
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership (applies to employees only)

Our general duty to advance equality of opportunity includes the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantage experienced by people who share a protected characteristic
- Take steps to meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic
- Take steps to take account of people’s impairments
- Encourage people with a prospective characteristic to participate in public life or other activities where participation is disproportionately low

Unlawful discrimination is defined in the Equality Act as:

- Direct discrimination (including discrimination based on perception or association).
- Indirect discrimination
- Discrimination arising from disability
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people

#### Harassment

Harassment is defined as unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic, or which is of a sexual nature, that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

#### Victimisation

Victimisation is defined in the Act as treating someone badly because they have carried out a "protected act" or because the institution believes that a person has or is going to do a protected act. A protected act is:

- Making a claim or complaint of discrimination (under the Equality Act)
- Helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information
- Making an allegation that the institution or someone else has breached the Act
- Doing anything else in connection with the Equality Act

People can be unfairly treated on other grounds, not covered by the Act. The Mary Ward Centre's founding principle of "equalisation" (see above) has meant that historically the Centre has been concerned with socio-economic discrimination.