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<b>By</b>	Senior Team
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# **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY**

## **EQUAL & DIVERSITY POLICY FOR STUDENTS**

## 1. Introduction

At VLUK we wish to create and maintain a trusting, secure and happy environment where everyone can work as equals. All members of the VLUK community have responsibilities to promote equality of opportunity, experience, and treatment and to challenge stereotypes. Our community consists of a diverse range of people – employees, visitors, students<sup>1</sup>, and parents. We need to celebrate our differences, by understanding them and enjoying the diversity this brings.

## 2. Aims

We want to foster mutual tolerance and our aim is for everyone to feel valued within VLUK. By actively promoting equal opportunities and not discriminating<sup>2</sup> either directly or indirectly against anyone on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, beliefs, sexuality or gender VLUK can ensure that:

- All students have opportunities to achieve their potential
- Expectations of all students are high
- All students have access to and can make full use of VLUK's facilities and resources
- It reflects the community it serves and responds to its needs
- All students are prepared for life in a diverse and multi-ethnic society
- All students understand the meaning of prejudice, how discrimination occurs and how to take a stand against these
- It has a positive ethos and environment
- Racist and discriminatory incidents are dealt with effectively
- Inclusion issues are taken seriously and are considered in all aspects of VLUK life
- Diversity is an asset to VLUK
- Equality of opportunity in learning to enable all students to access the same materials and support

## 3. Equal Opportunities

All students and adults within VLUK have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. This includes a right to:

- Study, learn and work
- Physical, emotional and verbal respect, free from violence, bullying, and abusive language.
- Respect for their gender, race, and age
- Freedom from sexual comments or harassment and inappropriate use of humour
- The safety of their property

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<sup>1</sup> Definition of student: Apprentice, Study Programme Learner, Trainee, Intern, Adult Learner

<sup>2</sup> Refer to Appendix 1, Legal Framework

- Equal opportunities in relation to course access, recruitment, access to extra-curricular activities
- Activities and work experience. Students and stakeholders within VLUK are encouraged to challenge any inappropriate behaviour or comments. In the case of comments/incidents witnessed by others, silence and non-intervention will be viewed as agreement<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. Support

Support is available for students from their teacher, regional leader, coach, site leader or any trusted adult.

VLUK will use a number of different ways to communicate and promote this policy so that all of VLUK's employees, students, clients and stakeholders:

- Understand our commitment to equality and diversity.
- Understand roles and responsibilities.
- Know where to seek advice and guidance.

VLUK will promote this policy and procedure using various mediums:

- Apprentices / learners will be introduced to this policy and procedure during the apprenticeship programme induction session and will have a copy of it in the apprenticeship induction handbook to refer to.
- VLUK employees will be introduced to this policy and procedure during their induction session and will have a copy of it in the company handbook to refer to.
- VLUK employee training / briefing meetings will include equality and diversity updates where applicable.
- Understanding will be confirmed at periodic apprentice / learner progress reviews.
- For VLUK employees, this policy and procedure will be promoted as widely as possible using VLUK's internal Google Drive and website.
- As part of the risk assessment process, employers will be asked to accept our policy and procedure if their own is not deemed sufficient at initial assessment. Commitment to the policy and procedure will be required from their employees before completion of probation / induction.
- Continued commitment from the employer will be evidenced in their involvement in the review process
- This will be repeated where necessary including during reviews or whenever changes in policy, procedure or legislation occur.

#### VLUK Employee Training

VLUK has a duty to promote equality and diversity issues and measures to their employees and ensure that they:

- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.

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<sup>3</sup> VLUK understands that there may be a need to link to the Safeguarding & Prevent Policy where appropriate and referrals will be made to the Safeguarding Lead

- Follow employee guidelines.
- Undertake annual training on equality and diversity to raise awareness of current issues and legislation.

**To ensure that this happens:**

- VLUK will provide initial and ongoing training and information to proactively promote equality and diversity awareness and support all their employees to understand their individual responsibilities.<sup>4</sup>
- All new VLUK employees will be trained in equality and diversity and agree commitment to this policy before successful completion of the probationary period is agreed.
- All apprenticeship trainers will be required to provide evidence of their annual CPD (Continuous Professional Development) in the area of equality and diversity.
- VLUK employees will also receive regular updates via email, meetings or bulletins to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.
- The VLUK employee induction handbook will also signpost all relevant policies and procedures.

**5. Responsibilities**

**Responsibilities of VLUK Directors and Leadership**

This policy has been agreed by, and circulated to all VLUK directors and employees respectively. Overall responsibility for the equality and diversity policy lies with the Director of Quality and Compliance (Yaseen Akhtar) who has been given the responsibility of monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and any infringement of it.

***Directors and managers will ensure that:***

- Their own behaviour and those of VLUK employees whom they manage complies in full with this policy.
- They deal with all allegations of discrimination, harassment and victimisation sensitively and investigate fairly and thoroughly.
- Any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation carried out by an individual is treated as a matter for possible disciplinary action
- The concept of British Values is embedded within the curriculum.
- Equality and diversity is built into all aspects of the apprenticeship programme.
- All learning takes place in a supportive environment free from discrimination or harassment.
- Provide training in equality and diversity to VLUK employees, to give them the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence and to deal with equality and diversity issues in a professional manner.
- Employees and apprentices / learners are made aware of the equality, diversity and policy as part of their induction programme.
- VLUK recruitment,<sup>5</sup> selection and appointment procedures, performance management processes, employee development opportunities and disciplinary and grievance processes are fairly and consistently applied to all VLUK employees.

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<sup>4</sup> Link to Teaching and Learning policy

<sup>5</sup> Appropriate staff involved will have undertaken safer recruitment training

- VLUK employees understand they can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow VLUK employees, suppliers, employers, apprentices / learners and the general public. Where identified all staff are empowered to take appropriate action

***Students will:***

- Avoid saying or doing anything which will hurt others.
- Report all incidents of discrimination and if necessary, refer to the Safeguarding & Prevent procedure.
- Offer support or advice to anyone they see being discriminated against.
- Advise VLUK about ideas that they think will help to prevent discrimination.

***All staff, including partner delivery staff will:***

- Comply with the requirements of the policy and undertake appropriate diversity and equality training.
- Avoid saying or doing anything which will hurt others.
- Actively demonstrate that they are committed to stopping discrimination in VLUK by modelling positive teaching and learning to students and ensure that their own interactions are clear and firm without being confrontational.
- Strive to develop an atmosphere of trust and respect where students feel their concerns are taken seriously.
- Listen seriously to all complaints and concerns about discriminatory behaviour.
- Challenge all discrimination and report it.

***In addition, teaching staff will:***

- Address discrimination and related issues through their teaching<sup>6</sup>.
- Find ways to engage their students in meaningful dialogue about equality and discrimination ensuring that all students are aware of where to go / what to do if they are being discriminated against or see someone who is being discriminated against.
- Promote British Values at all times
- Follow up all incidents of discrimination involving the students they have responsibility for.
- Actively encourage collaboration amongst students in their learning using a range of student groupings.
- Support those students identified as needing additional help to understand their own behaviour and its consequences.

***Parents and Carers will:***

- Inform VLUK if their child is being discriminated against.
- Support VLUK in its actions against those who discriminate.

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to teaching and learning policy (classroom rules etc)

- Always contact VLUK if they have a concern about discrimination.

## **6. Racial Equality & Cultural Diversity**

The curriculum of VLUK and its educational partners will, where appropriate incorporate multi-faith teaching and learning about other cultures. This universal approach may include visits to places of worship, sites of specific religious/cultural interest, and the use of speakers from different faiths and cultures. Racist language and behaviour will not be tolerated. All incidents will be recorded on a racist incident form and parents notified. Persistent racism may result in exclusion.

VLUK welcomes and recognises its duties under the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000<sup>7</sup>. We are committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity
- Promoting good relations between members of different racial, cultural and religious groups and communities
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination

In order to achieve these criteria we are guided by the following principles:

- Every student should have the opportunity to achieve the highest possible standards and the best possible qualifications for the next stages of their life and education
- Every student should be helped to develop a sense of personal and cultural identity that is confident and open to change and that is also receptive and respectful towards other identities
- Every student should develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that they need in order to participate in Britain's multi-ethnic society and in the wider context of an inter-dependent world
- Every student should have the right to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being in accordance with Every Child Matters agenda

VLUK is opposed to all forms of prejudice including racism, sexism and xenophobia. This includes prejudice which is directed towards religious groups and particular communities, for example, Islamophobia, travellers, refugees and asylum-seekers. VLUK hopes through education and knowledge to teach respect, tolerance and understanding towards different beliefs, cultures and lifestyles. Racist/sexist jokes will be regarded as any other form of bullying and will be dealt with as such.

## **7. Religious Observance**

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to Appendix 1 – Legal Framework

We respect the religious beliefs and practices of all staff, students and their parents, and will comply with all reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice in accordance with the absence policy.

## **8. The Dress Code**

Parents are asked that students do not wear anything which has a slogan, writing or illustration that may be offensive in any way to anyone else. Clothing must be appropriate in terms of decency. Partners reserve the right to ask students who wear revealing/inadequate clothing to go home and change. Persistent breaches of the code could result in exclusion.

## **9. Recruitment of Employees and Apprentices / Learners**

Recruitment and selection decisions will support the equality and diversity policy.

VLUK will:

- Adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to advertising. Advertisements will avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.
- Not confine recruitment to areas or sources which provide only, or mainly applicants of a particular group.
- Make certain that all who apply will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job / complete the apprenticeship programme.
- Use interview questioning that will not be of a discriminatory nature.
- Ensure discussions with apprentices / learners during the initial assessment and professional discussion will not be of a discriminatory nature.
- Make selection decisions that are not influenced by any perceived prejudices of others.

## **10. Training and Assessment of Apprentices / Learners**

The training and assessment of apprentices / learners will support the equality and diversity policy. To ensure that this happens:

- VLUK will ensure that all apprentices / learners, regardless of their background, achieve their potential.
- All apprentices / learners will be given access to training and development opportunities without being influenced by any protected characteristic.
- VLUK will encourage all apprentices / learners to develop an insight into the lives and experiences of people with different backgrounds of their own.
- The training and assessment of apprentices / learners will be undertaken without discrimination either directly or indirectly.
- VLUK will make a wide range of training and assessment methods available to apprentices / learners.
- Wherever possible, apprentices / learners with particular needs will be identified and we will provide the necessary reasonable adjustments to facilitate training and assessment.

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the Directors and educational partners to ensure that VLUK complies with the legislation and that this policy and all related procedures and strategies are implemented.

## **Appendix 1 – Legal Framework**

**Equality Act 2010** – introduces the term “protected characteristic” to refer to a person’s identity. This explicitly protects them from discrimination. The nine identified are:

- Race
- Disability
- Gender
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion and belief
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy/maternity
- Marriage/civil partnership

The act also identifies the following types of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination, including associate and perceived discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Harassment
- Harassment by others
- Victimisation
- Discrimination arising from a disability
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments