

Equality and Diversity: Access to Signature Qualifications and Assessments

1. Scope and Purpose of Policy

This is a supplement to the Equal Opportunities policy. The purpose is to set out our commitment to ensure equality of opportunity in terms of access to our qualifications and assessments.

2. Responsibility

Executive Director, Qualifications and Quality Team

3. Statement

Signature is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all candidates taking our qualifications and assessments. We will take steps to make sure learners, taking our assessments, are not disadvantaged directly or indirectly, because of a protected characteristic, as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Protected characteristics include: age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; pregnancy and maternity.

To meet our commitment we will:

- make sure that equality principles are taken into account when developing and submitting units and/or qualifications;
- clearly set out requirements of our units and/or qualifications and explain any justifiable barriers for entry;
- keep our units, qualifications, assessments and products under review. We may make changes, if these checks show that some candidates may be disadvantaged, or potentially disadvantaged, as long as the standards of the qualification are maintained;
- refer such cases for review by the Board of Trustees;
- take action to improve the take-up of our qualifications by disadvantaged and under-represented groups. This could include providing assessment opportunities to meet particular assessment needs;
- as part of the monitoring of candidate registrations, examination entries, results and reporting of data (including disability, ethnicity and gender), we will also collect information on requests for reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and feedback from candidates, centres and other stakeholders;
- have in place clear arrangements for making reasonable adjustments that maximise opportunity for candidates with disabilities. Signature will consider, individually, each request for these adjustments;
- make sure that candidates can access our complaints procedures, so that they can take action if they believe that they have been treated unfairly within the scope of this policy;

- publish our equal opportunities policy online and make sure that our centres are familiar with this policy;
- make sure that our centres have an Equal Opportunities Policy for assessment purposes, and have policies and procedures in place to ensure consistency of standards, and support the principle of equal opportunities. Centres confirm this through the centre recognition approval process;
- make sure that all Signature staff understand this. We will provide appropriate training where necessary;
- the language we use is clear, accessible, free from bias, and appropriate to the qualification;
- this policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

4. Definitions

Direct discrimination is where a learner is treated less favourably than another learner because of a characteristic under law.

Indirect discrimination is a provision, criteria or practice is applied in the same way for everyone which then has the effect of putting learners with a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. There are occasions where the application of a provision, criteria or practice can be justified as fair means of achieving a legitimate aim e.g. BSL/ISL is a visual language. Candidates therefore must have sufficient vision, manual dexterity and facial movement to convey and understand meaning in BSL.

5. References

- Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration policy
- General Conditions of Regulations (Ofqual)
- PRO 1 The recognition of centres to offer awards within the QCF
- Guidance for Awarding Bodies: Access to External Assessment for D/Deaf Candidates
- The Equality Act 2010

6. Location and Access to the Policy

Policy can be downloaded from our website www.signature.org.uk

7. Person Responsible for the Policy (policy writer)

Qualifications & Quality Manager