



## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

This amended document has been written with reference to the Employment Equality Acts 1998 - 2015.

### **OBJECTIVE**

The Athlone Institute of Technology is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to developing, maintaining and supporting a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in employment in which staff are treated equitably and where they can realise their potential whatever their **Gender, Civil Status, Family Status, Sexual Orientation, Religion, Age, Disability, Race or Member of the Travelling Community, or any other criteria that cannot be shown to be properly justifiable**. As such it is committed to equality of opportunity for existing and potential employees, and to promoting a work environment free from discrimination on the above mentioned grounds, in accordance with the relevant legislation. In relation to discrimination on the basis of nationality, nothing in the relevant legislation shall render unlawful any action taken in accordance with the **Employment Permits Act, Amended 2003 - 2014**.

Employment decisions will accordingly be based on merit, qualifications, abilities, skills, knowledge and attitude required to perform the job effectively and efficiently, to the standards required both in the present and in the future. Recruitment and selection policies, promotion policies, and training and development policies, and all associated documentation, will reflect the Institute's commitment to this policy.

It is the responsibility of every Manager in the Institute to support the Equal Opportunities Policy and to communicate it to their staff. All staff members of the Institute are expected to comply with this policy, and are assured by the Institute that any individual who wishes to raise concerns or make a complaint in relation to the operation of the policy may do so without fear of reprisal or victimisation.

Any staff member who is found to have engaged in any form of discrimination in contravention of this Equal Opportunities Policy, will be liable for disciplinary action.

### **DISCRIMINATION**

The Employment Equality Acts, 1998 - 2015, outlaw discrimination in a wide range of employment and employment-related areas. These include recruitment and

promotion; equal pay; working conditions; training or experience; dismissal and harassment including sexual harassment. The legislation defines discrimination as treating one person in a less favourable way than another person based on any of the following grounds:

- Gender: this means man, woman or transsexual
- Civil status: includes single, married, separated, divorced, widowed people, civil partners and former civil partners.
- Family status: this refers to the parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability.
- Sexual orientation; includes gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual
- Religion; means religious belief, background outlook or none
- Age; this does not apply to a person under 16
- Disability; includes people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions.
- Race; includes race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- Membership of the Traveller Community

**Direct discrimination** is taken to occur where a person is treated less favourably than another person is, has been or would be treated, in a comparable situation, on any of the nine grounds specified due to a fact or circumstance which:

- exists,
- existed but no longer exists,
- may exist in the future,
- or is imputed to the person concerned.

Discrimination also occurs where a person is, has been or would be, treated less favourably than another, in a comparable situation, due to an association with another person, on any of the grounds listed in the scope of the legislation.

**Indirect Discrimination** occurs where an employer sets down an apparently neutral provision which operates to the disadvantage of one of the nine categories. It occurs when the provision cannot be objectively justified by a legitimate, reasonable aim and the means of achieving the aim are not appropriate and necessary.

## **RECRUITMENT & SELECTION**

The Institute is committed to employment diversity and equality of opportunity for all job applicants and selects those suitable for employment solely on the basis of merit. Job advertisements, job descriptions, job specifications, application forms and publicity material will encourage applications from all qualified suitable candidates and will not discriminate on any of the nine grounds prohibited under the Acts.

Recruitment documentation and publicity material will indicate that the Institute is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in employment. Application forms will be simple and clear and will not require the provision of unnecessary or irrelevant information.

This policy does not apply to any matter connected with, or related to, the employment of a person where the gender or characteristic of the person, constitutes a

genuine and determining occupational requirement for the post. This exception is in accordance with the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2015.

## **SELECTION**

There will be no bias against candidates at interview on any of the nine grounds. Interviewers will not make assumptions about the suitability of individuals for certain types of work based on any of these grounds. Interview boards will not be comprised of persons of one sex only.

Questions at interview will be related to the requirements of the job. Where it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect performance (e.g. where the job involves unsocial hours or extensive travel) the same relevant questions, where deemed absolutely necessary, will be asked of all candidates.

The Institute will ensure that persons involved in making employment-related decisions are aware of their responsibilities, the Institute's policies, and the legal requirements.

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT & PROMOTION**

Opportunities for promotion and career development will be given without regard to any of the nine grounds. Promotional procedures will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on any of these grounds. It will not be assumed that family commitments lead to limited career aspirations.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The Institute is committed to the use of non-discriminatory language in all documents both internal and external, in recognition of the fact that language used can play an important role in conditioning attitudes. Words which have no gender (e.g. person and applicant) and text that specifically refers to both genders will be used as far as possible.

## **CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

The Institute will not discriminate unfairly in relation to working conditions, or access to overtime, shift work or transfers, where the circumstances in which staff are employed are not materially different.

## **HARASSMENT & BULLYING**

The Athlone Institute of Technology is committed to promoting an environment within the Institute that is free of harassment (including sexual harassment) and bullying and within which all members of the Institute will be treated with dignity. It is recognised that harassment and bullying can seriously damage working and social conditions, and it will not be tolerated during the course of work, study or any other activity of the Institute.

## **REDRESS**

Any person who wishes to raise issues concerning alleged discrimination should do so, in the first instance by writing in confidence to the Human Resources Manager. Alternatively, the issues can be raised through a recognised Trade Union. Advice and information on equality issues is also available from the **Equality Authority**. Please see the following link for their website address: <http://www.equality.ie/>

The Institute is committed to ensuring that all issues concerning alleged breaches of this policy will be dealt with seriously, promptly and with appropriate regard for confidentiality.

**REVIEW**

HR policies and procedures will be kept under review to ensure that they actively promote equality of opportunity in employment.

*Human Resources Department*

*Amended May 2017*