

# GUIDANCE NOTES FOR EMPLOYEES & CONTRACTORS

## Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

Axcis is an equal opportunity employer and is fully committed to a policy of treating all of its consultants, contractors and job applicants equally.

The Company will take all reasonable steps to appoint contractors on the basis of their experience, abilities and qualifications without regard to race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability.

The Company will also take all reasonable steps to provide contract placements in which all contractors are treated with respect and dignity and that is free of harassment based upon a contractor's race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability.

The Company will not condone any form of harassment towards its contractors, whether engaged in by employees or by outside third parties who do business with the Company.

### 2. Duty of Contractors

Contractors have a duty to co-operate with the Company to ensure that this Policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination, harassment or bullying.

Action will be taken by the Company's against any contractor who is found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation. Serious breaches of this equal opportunities and dignity at work statement will be treated as potential gross misconduct and could render the contractor liable to termination of their contract. Contractors should also bear in mind that they can be held personally liable for any act of unlawful discrimination. Any person who commits serious acts of harassment may also be guilty of a criminal offence.

Contractors should draw the attention of the Company to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or suspected cases of harassment. Contractors must not themselves victimise or retaliate against anyone who has made allegations or complaints of discrimination or harassment or who has provided information about such discrimination or harassment. Such behaviour will be treated as potential gross misconduct, which could result in contract termination.

### 3. Recruitment, Advertising and Selection

The Company is committed to applying its equal opportunities policy statement at all stages of recruitment and selection. The candidate selection process will be conducted in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job in terms of relevant experience, abilities and qualifications.

Advertisements will encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, the Company will, as far as reasonably practicable:

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1. Ensure advertisements are not confined to those publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants of a particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group.
2. Avoid prescribing any unnecessary requirements which would exclude a higher proportion of a particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group or which would exclude disabled job applicants.
3. Avoid prescribing any requirements as to marital or civil partnership status.
4. Where vacancies may be filled by promotion or transfer, they will be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees of any particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group or from employees with a disability.
5. Ensure that the setting of age limits as a criterion of any specific job is justifiable.
6. The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. All applications will be processed in the same way. The staff responsible for short-listing, interviewing and selecting candidates will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for their consistent application. Person specifications and job descriptions will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Wherever possible, all applicants will be interviewed by at least two interviewers and all questions asked of the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job. The selection of new contractors will be based on the job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question.

With disabled candidates and contractors, the Company will have regard to the duty to make reasonable adjustments to work provisions, criteria and practices or to work premises in order to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

If it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect the performance of the contract (for example, if the contract involves unsociable hours or extensive travel), this will be discussed objectively, without detailed questions based on assumptions about race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status, disability, children and/or domestic obligations.

### 4. Training and Promotion

The Company will train its permanent staff in its policy on equal opportunities and in helping them identify discriminatory acts or practices or acts of harassment or bullying, particularly insofar as they may relate to contractors.

The Company will promote best practice to help contractors understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to dignity at work and what they can do to create a work environment that is free of bullying and harassment when engaged on behalf of the Company.

### 5. Terms of Employment, Benefits, Facilities and Services

All terms of engagement, facilities and service will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability.

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### 6. Equal Pay

The Company is committed to equal pay in the placement of contractors. It believes its male and female contractors should receive equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. In order to achieve this, the Company will support a payment system for contractors that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

### 7. Bullying and Harassment

Bullying is offensive or intimidating behaviour or an abuse or misuse of power which undermines or humiliates an individual.

Harassment occurs where, on the grounds of a person's race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability, a person engages in unwanted conduct that:

- has the purpose of violating the person's dignity at work, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment for the person; or
- is reasonably considered by the person to have the effect of violating his or her dignity at work, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment for the person, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Conduct may be harassment whether or not the person intended to offend. Something intended as a "joke" or as "banter" may offend another person. This is because individuals find different levels of behaviour acceptable and everyone has the right to decide for themselves what behaviour they find acceptable to them.

Behaviour that a reasonable person would realise would be likely to offend an individual will always constitute harassment without the need for the person having to make it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable, for example, touching someone in a sexual way.

With other forms of behaviour, it may not always be clear in advance that it will offend a particular person, for example, banter and jokes in the workplace. In these cases, the behaviour will constitute harassment if the conduct continues after the individual has made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to him or her. A single incident can amount to harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

Harassment also occurs where, on the ground of the person's rejection of or submission to unwanted conduct of the kind specified above, a person treats another less favourably than they would treat them had they not rejected, or submitted to, the unwanted conduct.

#### Examples

Bullying and harassment may be verbal, non-verbal, written or physical. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include, but are not limited to, the following:

- unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, other conduct of a sexual nature;
- subjection to obscene or other sexually suggestive or racist comments or gestures;

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- the offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances or threats for rejecting sexual advances;
- jokes or pictures of a sexual or racial nature;
- demeaning comments about an individual's appearance;
- questions about a person's sex life;
- the use of nick names related to an employee's sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion, age or disability;
- picking on or ridiculing an employee;
- isolating an employee or excluding him or her from social activities or relevant work-related matters.

### 8. Reporting Complaints

All allegations of discrimination or harassment will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The Company will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints of discrimination or harassment from members of a particular race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or age or from individuals, who have undergone gender reassignment, are married, have entered into a civil partnership or have a disability.

With cases of harassment, while the Company encourages contractors who believe they are being harassed to notify the offender (by words or by conduct) that their behaviour is unwelcome, the Company also recognises that actual or perceived power and status disparities may make such confrontation impractical.

If contractors wish to make a complaint of discrimination or harassment, they should follow the following steps:

1. First of all, report the incident of discrimination or harassment to the line manager within the employing organisation. If this is not possible or desirable, the contractor can instead speak to a member of the Axcis team.
2. Such reports should be made promptly so that investigation may proceed and any action taken expeditiously.
3. All allegations of discrimination or harassment will be taken seriously. The allegation will be promptly investigated and, as part of the investigatory process, the contractor will be interviewed and asked to provide a written witness statement setting out the details of the complaint. Confidentiality will be maintained during the investigatory process to the extent that this is practical and appropriate in the circumstances. However, in order to effectively investigate an allegation, the Company must be able to determine the scope of the investigation and the individuals who should be informed of or interviewed about the allegation. For example, the identity of the complainant and the nature of the allegations must be revealed to the alleged harasser or discriminator so that he or she is able to fairly respond to the allegations. The Company reserves the right to arrange for another person to conduct the investigation other than the individual with whom the matter was raised.
4. The Company may invite the contractor to attend a meeting at a reasonable time and place to discuss any complaint.

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5. Once the investigation has been completed and after any meetings have taken place, the contractor will be informed in writing of the outcome and the Company's conclusions and decision as soon as possible. The Company is committed to taking appropriate action with respect to all complaints of discrimination or harassment which are upheld.
6. Contractors will not be penalised for raising a complaint, even if it is not upheld, unless the complaint was both untrue and made in bad faith.
7. If a complaint is upheld and a harasser or discriminator remains in position, the Company will take all reasonable steps to ensure that contractors do not have to continue working alongside them if that is possible. The Company will discuss the options with the contractor.
8. If a complaint is not upheld, arrangements will be made for the individual and the alleged harasser or discriminator to continue or resume working and to repair working relationships.

Any contractor who is found to have discriminated against or harassed another person in violation of this Policy may be subject to action, e.g. contract termination.

## 9. Monitoring Equal Opportunity and Dignity at Work

The Company will monitor performance in order to assess whether equal opportunity and dignity at work are being achieved. This will also involve considering any possible indirectly discriminatory effects of its working practices. If changes are required, the Company will implement them. The Company will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

## 10. Communicating this Policy

This Policy will be communicated to contractors at their initial induction interview / briefing and thereafter from time to time, as determined appropriate by the Company.

This Policy should be followed in conjunction with any specific local arrangements imposed by the client and with the agreement of the Company.

A copy of this Policy is available from the HR Director.

This policy is valid from 15th May 2018

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