

Section 1: Understand the meaning of equality and diversity in places of work and how organisations promote this

Understand the meaning of equality and diversity in the workplace

Please read the following as it will help you answer question 1.

Equality in the UK

Equality in the UK is about fostering and promoting the right to be different, to be free from discrimination, and to have choice and dignity and to be valued as an individual, with a right to their own beliefs and values.

Diversity

The word diverse means “varied and different” so ‘diversity’ is about more than equality. It is about valuing variety and individual differences and creating a culture, environment and practices which respect and value differences for the benefit of society, organisations and individuals.

Why is a diverse workplace important?

A diverse workforce is important because the organisation can offer a wider range of resources, skills, ideas and energy to the business, providing a competitive edge. Organisations who embrace diversity will reap the benefits of resourcing from a wider pool of talent, broaden their market, improve productivity and raise their profile in the community.

‘Diversity management’ (actively encouraging a diverse workforce) and promoting ‘equality of opportunity’ (fostering a culture where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential) can benefit an organisation in a number of ways, including by:

- improving opportunities within the organisation through internal promotion
- utilising the knowledge of different areas of the community
- understanding market segments and consumer behaviour
- becoming an employer of choice
- having a more representative ‘balanced’ workforce
- valuing and respecting employees, attracting recruiting and retaining a wider talent pool

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Diversity can deliver other positive outcomes and benefits, such as:

- improved retention and progression for employees
- work takes place in an inclusive, vibrant, nurturing environment
- staff have a better appreciation and respect for difference
- a more comprehensive understanding of needs and wants of staff
- encouraging contrasting perspectives, which improves team productivity and success
- improves employee morale and so raises motivation
- improved standards of delivery

Equal opportunities and its meaning

Please read the following as it will help you answer question 2.

Equal opportunity is about addressing representation and balance, but is a term most often used within human resources to describe the measures taken by organisations to ensure fairness in employment and the recruitment process.

Equal opportunity:

- means treating people as individuals, with different skills and abilities, without making judgments based on stereotypes
- is based upon offering fair, equal and courteous opportunities to all individuals
- should include the principle of treating people with fairness
- should create a way of life where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated and valued
- should be well-established in public services

Your organisation should have an 'equal opportunities policy'. This will describe the steps your organisation will take in order to promote equality in the workplace and to abide by equality legislation (such as the Equal Pay Act 1984, now replaced by the Equality Act 2010).

In terms of employment it is designed to prevent situations such as:

- an external applicant getting a position because the job wasn't advertised internally
- a male employee being paid more than a female colleague for the same job

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- an employer allowing time off/holidays to workers from one religion but not from other faiths
- a person with a physical impairment being unable to join an organisation due to lack of (for example) wheelchair access to the building
- interviews only being given to workers of a particular gender/age, when this isn't a factor in being able to perform the role
- a particular employee being overlooked for promotion because of a perception that because of their gender they will not command the respect of people under their management

Recruitment

All applications must be treated appropriately and someone cannot be rejected because of their gender, colour of skin, religion or any other discriminatory reason. To ensure that each applicant for a job role is treated fairly then it is important that an organisation follows certain procedures. These include:

- Advertising in a range of locations (online and press or through job centres) so they are able to publicise the role to as wide an audience as possible.
- Having a set job description so each applicant is evaluated against agreed criteria.
- Having an interview panel so the views of more than one person are taken into account when deciding who should get the position.
- Ensuring that, as far as is reasonably practicable, access to sites is open to all.
- Making available certain pieces of equipment such as computer systems that have screen magnification for those who are partially sighted.



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Pay

No employee should be paid more or less than their colleagues undertaking the same job role due to their gender, colour of skin, religion or any other discriminatory reason. However, there can be some legitimate differences in pay between employees carrying out the same job role. For example, if people work different hours like evenings or weekends, if someone has more experience or qualifications or they have been with the company for a longer period of time. To ensure these differences in pay are legitimate the employer must be able to justify that it is because of reasons that are not connected with a bias towards one individual over another.

Promotion

No employee should be restricted from promotional opportunities based on their gender, colour of skin, religion or any other discriminatory reason. Organisations should have ongoing discussions with employees about how the employee sees their career developing and providing them with training and support if they do wish to move into more senior roles. This can be done at one-to-ones, personal reviews or Appraisals.

