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##### Equal Opportunity Policy

**Statement of Policy**

NISQ – Governing Body NISQ

FMO – Facilities Management Officer NISQ

CCO – Chief Compliance Officer

NISQ has a diverse workforce and positively welcomes the strength that diversity brings to its operations. Our work will also bring staff into regular contact with members of the public from widely diverse backgrounds.

NISQ is totally committed to ensuring that, in its policy and operations, it and all its’ staff act in a way that positively promotes equality and diversity.

Everyone in the NISQ must treat all fellow staff and members of the public with respect and on a fair and equal basis, in line with NISQ policies.

The NISQ is also committed to the principle that no employee or job applicant shall receive unfavourable treatment on the grounds of race, religious beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status or disability.

**Reasons for the Policy**

The NISQ wishes to employ the most suitable and appropriately qualified people for the work to be undertaken.

Over a period of time, legislation has been introduced to encourage equal opportunities and to make discrimination unlawful. But the NISQ’s commitment to equality and diversity is not just driven by that. This is a core value for the NISQ. Equally our clients and their staff represent all the diversity in our society and it is vital that we provide a service to them that is fair open and maintains the highest standards of conduct

**Equality of Treatment**

The policy aims to ensure that members of staff adhere to the principle of equality of treatment. It prohibits acts of discrimination whereby one individual is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of race, religious belief, sex (gender), community background, sexual orientation, age, marital status or disability.

Examples of such discrimination by an employer include:

* Deliberately refusing or omitting to make an offer of employment
* Restricting or denying access to promotion, transfer, training, or other benefits or facilities
* Dismissing an individual
* Subjecting an individual to some other detriment (for example, racial or sexual harassment)
* Discriminating in the arrangements made for deciding who should be offered a job.

Discrimination may be ‘direct’, as in the cases described above, or ‘indirect’, which can occur when there is no intention to discriminate but operation of the policy illegally impacts upon or excludes someone on unjustified grounds. For example, an advertisement specifying an upper age limit of 28 years could be regarded as indirect discrimination against women because such a condition would have the Adverse Effect of excluding many women temporarily unavailable for work for reasons connected with motherhood.

Discrimination by ‘victimisation’ occurs where a person is treated unfavourably because, for example, he or she has brought proceedings, or given evidence or information in a case involving sex or race discrimination.

A manager or employee who contravenes (or knowingly aids another person to contravene) the NISQ’s policy may be held personally liable for committing an act of lawful discrimination and may, together with the NISQ, be subject to legal proceedings.

**Responsibilities**

The Governing Body of NISQ has overall responsibility for the application of the equal opportunities policy.

NISQ Governing Body are responsible for communicating the policy to all employees, providing operational procedures and training, and monitoring the application of the policy. Directors are responsible for ensuring that they and all staff under their control understand the policy and observe the correct procedures.

All employees have an important part to play in the application of the policy, that their attitudes and actions are consistent at all times with both the spirit and the letter of the policy.

**Recruitment, selection and promotion**

NISQ’s intention in respect of recruitment, selection and promotion is to appoint the most able candidate for each job regardless of that person’s race, religious beliefs, community background, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability.

In order to ensure that this intention is realised, the requirements of each job are identified, and all candidates assessed against the same criteria at each stage of the selection process, to ensure that fairness and consistency are achieved throughout. Similarly, all candidates for promotion possessing appropriate skills, knowledge and experience are given the same degree of consideration. Employee appraisals are concerned only with the assessment of actual performance in the job. Assumptions about individuals in relation to their race, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability are unacceptable.

**Conditions of employment and provision of benefits and services**

All conditions of employment, employee benefits and services apply irrespective of race, religious beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability.

Accommodation and facilities are provided, as far as it is practicable to do so, having proper regard for the needs of the disabled.

**Observing the policy**

The overall aim of the policy is to promote a harmonious working environment for all members of staff. Therefore, the appropriate supervisor or manager should be informed if an occasion arises, or is suspected to have arisen, where an individual experiences unfavourable treatment on the grounds of race, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability. An employee who feels he or she is unable to discuss the matter with his or her supervisor or manager may contact the Managing Director.

A member of staff with a grievance concerning the application of this policy should follow the grievance procedure.

It is a disciplinary offence to discriminate intentionally against a fellow employee or job applicant in contravention of the policy.

**Monitoring**

NISQ will monitor and continuously review the operation of the policy and expects all employees to co-operate by providing relevant information, where necessary. All such information will be treated as strictly confidential and used solely for this purpose. In this it will fully comply with the requirements in relation to:

* Annual monitoring of data
* Triennial Reviews of its Equality Policies
* All polices of the EOC in England and Wales and Ireland as they relate to NISQ and representatives/staff in that jurisdiction

**Sexual or racial harassment**

Sexual or racial harassment is a form of discrimination. It is unlawful behaviour and in direct contravention of the NISQ’s equal opportunities policy.

Sexual or racial harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual or racial nature, which is either personally offensive or fails to respect the rights of others. It includes making gestures, comments or ‘jokes’, the display of offensive material and physical contact or assault.

NISQ have a responsibility to eliminate any sexual or racial harassment or intimidation of which they are aware.

An employee who believes that he or she is, or has been, the subject of sexual or racial harassment should, initially, raise the matter with his or her immediate supervisor.

Formal investigations of complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the NISQ’s grievance and disciplinary procedures, and will be handled sensitively and confidentially, with due respect for the rights of those concerned.

If the outcome of the investigation reveals that a complaint is justified, appropriate action, including disciplinary action, will be taken. Retaliation or victimisation of an employee who has complained about harassment will also be treated as a disciplinary offence.

In general, the legislation that applies in Northern Ireland is different to that for the rest of the UK, although many of the provisions that apply in the rest of the UK have been reflected in the legal framework in Northern Ireland via secondary legislation. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 established the devolved Northern Ireland Assembly. Anti-discrimination legislation is devolved in Northern Ireland (in Wales and Scotland this is still be devolved to this level) so the Northern Ireland Assembly is responsible for passing or amending anti-discrimination legislation.

The main legislation is:

• age: Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006

• disability: Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 (DDO)

• race: Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997

• religion and belief or political opinion: Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998

• sex: (including gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, and maternity and pregnancy) Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970

• sexual orientation: Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003

• Fair employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998; religion and belief or political opinion.

**William McDowell**

**Director**

NISQ Governing Body