



Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy

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Amendment History

Revision Summary	Date Approved	Author

Irish Baptist College

Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

1. The Irish Baptist College is an evangelical theological college and the Training Department of the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland. As a confessional College, it is committed to the study and understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ as witnessed to by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The College aims to set its teaching in the context of the challenges of the world in which the gospel is to be proclaimed.
2. The values of the College are set out on its website and are directly drawn from and aligned with biblical principles. In particular:
 - Listening to the voice of God through his word in the context of a worshipping community.
 - Serving God and one another through selfless commitment, demonstrated in compassion and care for everyone.
 - Treating others as we would wish to be treated in respectful attitudes and actions.
 - Recognising the inherent moral equality, dignity and worth of every individual in a diverse and inclusive community.
 - Promoting integrity in every facet of College life through honesty and truthfulness in attitudes and actions.
 - Assisting all students and staff of the College to reach their potential in life and service.
3. The promotion of diversity and equality is, therefore, an important part of the College's mission. It will continue to actively promote diversity and equality opportunities in its student selection and training policies and in its employment policies, practices and procedures.

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4. It is the policy of the Irish Baptist College that all people, irrespective of their religion, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, gender, marital status or sexual orientation will be treated equally.
5. The College's procedures will:
 - Ensure that students are assessed solely on the basis of the quality of their work and that staff are appointed solely on the basis of their merits and abilities.
 - Foster an environment in which all staff and students can realise their full potential through the development of their skills and abilities, regardless of their background;
 - Ensure that all students, staff and applicants to the College are treated with respect and dignity and receive fair and equal treatment in all aspects of their applications, employment or learning;

- Ensure that all staff comply with the College's Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy through the provision of appropriate training.
6. Exceptions to the College's Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy relate to the specific confessional nature of the College. This means that there may be circumstances which justify differential treatment, and which are not unlawful (for example: in the admission of candidates for ministry training or in recruitment to College staff where there is a genuine occupational requirement for the candidate to be a Christian; to comply with a matter of doctrine in accordance with our ABCI doctrinal statement; or to make an adjustment in order to accommodate a person with a disability). As a confessional Christian College, the nature and context of our ministry training means therefore, that personal characteristics, such as religious beliefs, will lawfully and properly inform decisions. This will be indicated in advertisement or literature and taken into account during the process.

Diversity and Equal Opportunities Objectives

7. The following are examples of specific actions that are being taken by the College and which will be reviewed at regular intervals, to ensure that diversity and equal opportunity initiatives are successful.
- This Policy will be communicated throughout the committee structures of the College and the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland (ABCI).
 - All literature on the selection of students and on the appointment of staff will include a statement on diversity and equal opportunities;
 - All application forms will be monitored;
 - Selection criteria, job descriptions and person specifications will be kept under regular review to ensure that they are justifiable;
 - All applications for employment will be given equal consideration, with selection being based on aptitude, merit and ability;
 - Those responsible for the interview and selection of students, staff and employees will be familiarised with the operation of the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy;
 - All candidates for employment and prospective students will be asked questions at interview to ascertain if they understand and affirm the purpose and reasons for this Policy.

Equality legislation Northern Ireland

8. Northern Ireland equality and anti-discrimination law is not consolidated into one single act. Equality areas are:
- age;
 - disability;
 - gender/sex
 - race;
 - religious belief/political opinion;
 - sexual orientation.

9. There are several pieces of legislation covering the above equality areas. These are underpinned by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which states that public bodies ensure '*equality of opportunity and good relations are central to policy-making and service delivery*' and have '*due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between:*
- *persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;*
 - *men and women generally;*
 - *persons with a disability and persons without;*
 - *persons with dependants and persons without.*¹
10. Relevant Legislation includes:
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004
 - Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976
 - Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970
 - Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
 - Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998

Responsibility of Staff and Students

11. The co-operation of all students and staff is essential for the success of this Policy. All students and staff also have a responsibility not to discriminate against any groups or individuals. The overall responsibility for achieving the objectives of this Policy and ensuring its compliance, however, rests with the Management Committee of the College.
12. Where it is believed there has been inappropriate behaviour further guidance can be found in the College's Complaints Policy documents. Behaviour or actions on the part of students or staff which do not comply with this Policy will be considered as a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action being taken.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/part/VII/crossheading/equality-of-opportunity> Section 75 (1)