



Diversity, Equality, Equity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Statement

YMCA Awards is committed to embedding diversity, equality, equity and inclusion (DEEI) across all aspects of its organisation and services. This includes how we treat and support our employees, workers, contractors, directors and governance bodies, and how we design, deliver, assess and quality assure our qualifications and services for learners, apprentices, centres, employers and other external stakeholders.

YMCA Awards is committed to ensuring that its activities, services and qualifications are free from unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

A proactive, systematic and ongoing focus on DEEI is essential to ensuring lawful practice, fair treatment, fair access to assessment, and the validity and integrity of YMCA Awards's qualifications and services.

Internally, we are committed to creating a working environment in which all individuals are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, feel valued for who they are, and are supported to participate fully and realise their potential.

Externally, we are committed to ensuring that centres, learners and apprentices are not disadvantaged by unnecessary or unlawful barriers arising from qualification design, assessment methods, delivery arrangements or centre practice, and that all individuals have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and competence.

YMCA Awards takes a strategic and evidence-led approach to embedding and promoting DEEI, integrating it into policy development, qualification and assessment design, reasonable adjustments, centre approval and monitoring, external quality assurance, and continuous improvement activity.

DEEI considerations inform decision-making at all levels of the organisation, including employment practices, governance, qualification development, assessment arrangements, centre oversight, and the management of risk to learners, standards and public confidence.

What do we mean by Diversity, Equality, Equity and Inclusion (DEEI)

Diversity

YMCA Awards recognises that attracting, valuing and respecting diversity in all its forms brings significant benefits to the organisation and those we work with. Diversity of background, identity, experience, perspective and thought supports innovation, more effective decision-making, and a broader range of skills and life experiences.

Greater diversity, when combined with an accessible, safe and inclusive environment, helps to create an organisation in which individuals are able to participate fully, achieve their personal ambitions, and contribute to wider organisational impact and success. This applies both to how YMCA Awards operates as an organisation and to how it designs, delivers and quality assures its qualifications and services.

Equality and Equity

YMCA Awards promotes equality of opportunity in recruitment, employment, governance, and in the design, delivery and assessment of its qualifications and services.

We recognise that achieving equitable outcomes does not always mean treating everyone the same. Some learners, apprentices, staff or stakeholders may require different types or levels of support, advice, reasonable adjustments and/or tailored approaches in order to access opportunities fairly and to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and competence.

We will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation in relation to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnicity and national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Our aim is that no individual or group is discriminated against or disproportionately disadvantaged, without lawful justification, in relation to employment, governance, assessment, or access to YMCA Awards's qualifications, programmes and services.

Inclusion

YMCA Awards recognises that strong and visible leadership of diversity, equality, equity and inclusion is a key driver of meaningful and sustained change.

We equip leaders and managers with the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to develop inclusive teams, challenge exclusionary practices and bias, identify and remove barriers to access, support the co-creation of inclusive and accessible qualifications and services, and promote a culture of trust and mutual respect in which individuals feel able to speak up and be heard.

Scope

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by YMCA Awards and to all individuals and organisations involved in, or affected by, those activities.

Internal scope

This policy applies to all employees, workers, contractors, consultants, directors and members of governance bodies acting on behalf of YMCA Awards. It covers all aspects of employment, engagement, governance and organisational decision-making, including recruitment, progression, performance management, training, leadership and workplace culture.

All individuals working for or on behalf of YMCA Awards are expected to uphold the principles set out in this policy and to act in a manner that promotes equality, equity and inclusion in both internal conduct and external-facing activity.

External scope

This policy also applies to YMCA Awards' external activities and services, including:

- the design, development and review of qualifications and assessment materials
- assessment arrangements and methods, including accessibility and fairness
- interactions with learners, apprentices, centres, employers and other stakeholders
- arrangements with centres, employers and other third parties involved in delivery, assessment or quality assurance

Where delivery or assessment activities are carried out by centres, employers or other third parties, YMCA Awards remains accountable for ensuring that equality, diversity, equity and inclusion are embedded appropriately within those arrangements.

Expectations relating to DEEI are set through contractual requirements, published policies and supporting guidance, and are monitored through approval, external quality assurance and scrutiny activity.

Relationship with other policies

This policy should be read alongside, and is supported by, other YMCA Awards policies and procedures that give effect to equality, equity and inclusion in practice, including:

- Fair assessment policy: Reasonable adjustments, special consideration and minimising bias
- External quality assurance policy
- Appeals policy and procedure
- Feedback and complaints policy

These policies set out the detailed procedures through which DEEI principles are applied, monitored and enforced in relation to assessment, centre delivery and learner experience. Where specific processes are required, they are addressed within those policies rather than duplicated here.

Related Legislation and Guidance

Legislation

This policy is informed by, and operates within, the requirements of relevant UK equality and human rights legislation, including:

- the **Equality Act 2010**, which provides the legal framework to protect individuals from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment and in the provision of services
- duties relating to reasonable adjustments for disabled people, including the anticipatory nature of those duties in relation to services and assessment
- the **Human Rights Act 1998**, which incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law and underpins principles of dignity, fairness, respect and access to education

YMCA Awards expects all staff, centres and other third parties acting on its behalf to comply with applicable equality and human rights legislation and to support its implementation in practice.

Regulatory context

As a regulated awarding organisation, YMCA Awards is required to ensure that its qualifications, assessments and services are fair, valid and accessible, and that learners are not disadvantaged by unnecessary or unlawful barriers.

This policy supports YMCA Awards' compliance with the regulatory expectations of qualifications regulators, including requirements relating to:

- the fair and valid design of qualifications and assessments
- the avoidance of bias, unnecessary offence or disadvantage in assessment materials and methods
- appropriate arrangements for reasonable adjustments and special consideration
- effective oversight of centres and third parties involved in delivery, assessment and quality assurance

Equality, diversity, equity and inclusion considerations are therefore integral to how YMCA Awards designs qualifications, sets assessment requirements, approves and monitors centres, and undertakes external quality assurance and scrutiny activity.

Responsibilities

YMCA Awards' responsibilities

YMCA Awards is responsible for setting the strategic direction, governance framework and operational controls that ensure equality, diversity, equity and inclusion are embedded appropriately across its organisation and services.

In practice, YMCA Awards will:

- ensure that equality, diversity, equity and inclusion are considered in the design, development, review and withdrawal of qualifications and assessment arrangements
- establish and maintain policies, procedures and guidance that support fair access, inclusive assessment practice and compliance with equality and human rights legislation
- ensure that reasonable adjustments and special consideration are managed in line with published requirements, and that assessment decisions remain valid and reliable
- set clear contractual expectations for centres and other third parties in relation to equality, equity and inclusion
- monitor compliance through approval processes, external quality assurance and scrutiny activity
- take proportionate action where concerns, non-compliance or risks relating to DEEI are identified
- use feedback, complaints, appeals and quality assurance findings to inform continuous improvement

YMCA Awards remains accountable for compliance with legal and regulatory requirements relating to DEEI, including where delivery or assessment activity is undertaken by centres or other third parties.

Responsibilities of YMCA Awards staff and representatives

All individuals working for or on behalf of YMCA Awards, including employees, contractors, consultants and external quality assurers, are responsible for:

- acting in a manner that reflects the principles of equality, equity and inclusion set out in this policy
- treating colleagues, learners, centres and stakeholders fairly, with dignity and respect

- understanding and applying relevant policies and guidance, including those relating to fair assessment and reasonable adjustments
- identifying and escalating potential DEEI-related concerns, risks or incidents through appropriate channels
- contributing to training, standardisation and professional development activity where required

Those with leadership or management responsibilities are additionally responsible for:

- promoting inclusive practice and challenging discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour
- ensuring that staff and associates have access to appropriate guidance, training and support
- taking timely and proportionate action where concerns are raised or issues are identified

Responsibilities of centres and other third parties

Centres, employers and other third parties involved in the delivery, assessment or quality assurance of YMCA Awards qualifications are expected to uphold the principles of equality, diversity, equity and inclusion in practice.

In particular, centres and third parties must:

- comply with applicable equality and human rights legislation
- ensure fair and inclusive access to learning, assessment and support for learners
- apply reasonable adjustments and special consideration in line with YMCA Awards' requirements and published guidance
- ensure that staff involved in delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance are competent, appropriately trained and supported
- cooperate fully with YMCA Awards' approval, monitoring, external quality assurance and scrutiny activity
- retain and provide access to records and evidence where required to support quality assurance and regulatory compliance
- take timely corrective action where issues or non-compliance are identified

Failure to meet these responsibilities may result in required actions, increased monitoring or sanctions, in line with the Centre Agreement and relevant YMCA Awards policies.

Shared responsibility

Equality, diversity, equity and inclusion are shared responsibilities. Effective implementation of this policy relies on the active engagement of YMCA Awards, its staff, centres and partners to identify barriers, address risk and promote fair and inclusive practice across all aspects of qualification delivery and assessment.

Implementation, monitoring and review

Implementation

YMCA Awards is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively across the organisation and within its external arrangements.

Implementation is supported through:

- induction, training and guidance for all employed and contracted staff
- integration of DEEI considerations into qualification and assessment design, approval and review processes
- clear guidance and contractual requirements for centres and other third parties
- alignment with supporting policies, including the Fair Assessment Policy and External Quality Assurance Policy.

All individuals working for or on behalf of YMCA Awards are expected to understand and apply this policy within the scope of their role.

Monitoring and assurance

YMCA Awards monitors the effectiveness of this policy and compliance with its requirements through proportionate and evidence-based assurance activities.

These may include:

- external quality assurance and scrutiny activity at centres
- review of reasonable adjustment and special consideration requests and trends
- analysis of feedback, complaints and appeals to identify potential equality or inclusion issues
- review of risks, incidents or concerns that may impact learners, staff or stakeholders
- governance oversight through appropriate internal reporting and review mechanisms

Where monitoring identifies potential or actual DEEI-related issues, YMCA Awards will take proportionate and timely action. This may include targeted guidance, additional training, increased monitoring, required corrective actions, or other interventions in line with contractual and policy requirements.

Review and continuous improvement

This policy is kept under regular review to ensure that it remains effective, proportionate and aligned with legal, regulatory and organisational requirements.

The policy will be reviewed:

- periodically as part of YMCA Awards' scheduled policy review cycle
- where there are changes to relevant legislation or regulatory expectations
- where monitoring activity, feedback or incidents indicate that changes are required

Revisions to this policy will be approved in line with YMCA Awards' governance arrangements and communicated appropriately to staff, centres and other relevant stakeholders.

Raising and handling concerns

YMCA Awards recognises the importance of providing clear, accessible and appropriate routes for raising concerns relating to equality, diversity, equity and inclusion.

Concerns may be raised through a range of established channels, depending on the nature of the issue, including:

- discussion with a line manager or senior member of staff
- reporting through YMCA Awards' systems and records, including Y-Connect
- feedback and complaints processes
- appeals processes, where concerns relate to assessment decisions
- identification through external quality assurance, monitoring or scrutiny activity

All DEEI-related concerns are taken seriously and considered proportionately. Where concerns relate to discrimination, unfair treatment or barriers to access, YMCA Awards will respond in line with its published policies, contractual arrangements and governance processes.

No individual should be treated less favourably or subjected to victimisation for raising a concern in good faith.