

**ASSOCIATED STUDIOS**  
Performing Arts Academy

**Equality and Diversity Policy**

**January 2017**

# **Policy Statement**

Associated Studios Performing Arts Academy (hereinafter referred to as Associated Studios) is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and providing a supportive and inclusive environment. We proactively demonstrate our deep commitment to widening participation and this commitment encompasses our students, staff, freelance tutors and other people who work with us.

## **Purpose of this Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to convey our commitments to equality and diversity by defining:

- (a) The expectations of all Associated Studios students, staff and tutors within this area
- (b) The key principles of equality and diversity
- (c) Our strategic priorities
- (d) Our measures for reporting of incidents and monitoring complaints.

## **Supporting Policies and Procedures**

This policy is designed to be used in conjunction our existing policies and procedures.

## **Scope of this policy**

This policy applies to all Associated Studios' students, employees, freelance workers and contractors. It supersedes all previous Equal Opportunities policies.

## Definition of Equality

Equality does not mean treating everyone in the same way. People may, for example, have different needs and requirements from us.

For the purposes of this policy, equality is defined as providing 'equality of opportunity'.

### Legal Status

Associated Studios has a legal obligation to provide 'equality of opportunity' to nine groups of people who hold 'protected characteristics'. These characteristics are defined as people who have different:

- 1) **Genders:** Men and women
- 2) **Races:** All racial/ethnic groups
- 3) **Religions or Beliefs:** Including certain non-religious belief systems
- 4) **Sexual Orientations**
- 5) **Ages**
- 6) **Marital Status:** Single, married, divorced, civil partnership, etc.
- 7) **Disabilities:** Physical and mental

Protected characteristics also include:

- 8) People who have **Changed their Gender:** Transsexual people
  - 9) People who are **Pregnant** or absent in connection with childbirth
- (a):** **The term** 'People' are Associated Studios' employees, students, job applicants, course applicants, freelancers, contractors and members of the public
- (b):** Protected characteristics are defined by *The Equality Act 2010*.

## Definition of Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as “*Less favourable treatment to a person (or persons) that is not capable of being justified*”. It is unlawful to discriminate against any person on the grounds of their ‘*Protected characteristics*’.

Please note that discrimination can occur in many different ways including:

- Direct Discrimination:** For example: deliberately selecting only female students for a course.
- Indirect Discrimination:** Where our policies or activities *indirectly* affect people who have different ‘*Protected Characteristics*’. For example: asking students to put a complaint in writing may indirectly discriminate against people with certain disabilities as they may find this request harder to comply with than non disabled students.
- Harassment:** This can be unwanted conduct that affects the self-esteem or dignity of students, staff (including freelance tutors) in their workplace or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment includes acts performed by third parties – for example: members of the public, contractors, etc.
- By Association:** For example: where a white student is harassed by other students because s/he is in a relationship with a black student.
- Victimisation:** For example: where a member of staff is pestered or mistreated by a line manager for making a complaint about another employee’s behaviour.
- By Perception:** For example: where a student is perceived to be gay / not gay and is teased about it - irrespective of the student’s actual sexual orientation.

## **Statutory Duty to Promote Equality**

Associated Studios also has a legal duty to 'promote' equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination as defined by *The Equality Act Public Sector Duty 2011*.

'Promote' can be defined as taking proactive measures to prevent discrimination occurring in the first place and fostering good relations between people who share different 'Protected characteristics'.

The following **Strategic Priorities** allows us to promote Equality and Diversity within Associated Studios.

- Promoting Inclusivity
- Gathering/Publishing Information
- Analysing our Activities
- Engagement and Consultation
- Publishing Objectives

## **Definition of Diversity**

Diversity is defined as recognising and embracing the differences that exist amongst us all – both inside and outside of the legal framework.

Associated Studios is an inclusive environment that respects backgrounds and differences irrespective of, for example, socio or economic status, pastimes, choice of attire, etc.

## **Expectations of all Associated Studios Staff and Students**

We expect all Associated Studios staff, students, freelancers and contractors to:

- (a) **Uphold the principles of this policy**
- (b) **Challenge behaviour that may marginalise or exclude others**
- (c) **Report behaviour or actions that contravene this policy**

As stated in our staff handbook, Associated Studios will not tolerate any acts of discrimination or harassment towards students, staff or other people who have dealings with us. Committing or condoning such acts may be considered as gross misconduct and dealt with through our disciplinary procedures.

## **Responsibilities for Equality and Diversity within Associated Studios**

Everyone connected with Associated Studios shares responsibility for promoting equality and diversity. Key responsibilities are as follows:

### **Associated Studios Trustees:**

Ensures Associated Studios follows all equality and diversity policies and achieves planned objectives.

### **The Principal:**

Demonstrates visible commitment to promoting equality and diversity within Associated Studios. Develops equality and diversity policies, procedures, strategies and action plans. Monitors and reviews progress.

### **Associated Studios Staff and Tutors:**

Put policies into practice. Promote equality and diversity in all activities – for example within auditions, teaching and assessments. Reduce achievement gaps between different groups of students. Adhere to policies and procedures in respect of complaints of discrimination and harassment.

### **Associated Studios Students:**

Respecting others in their language, actions and behaviours. Adhere to Associated Studios' equality and diversity policies. Report inappropriate behaviour and actions.

## Complaints

Any student or staff member may raise a complaint either formally or informally using Associated Studios' existing complaints procedures.

We monitor complaints made within Associated Studios by equality groups as part of our commitment to promote equality.

Complaints made by applicants or members of the public should be addressed to the Principal.

## Justifiable Discrimination in Decision Making

As a leading provider of drama training we are, at times, required to make decisions, particularly in respect of our students, that may appear to be discriminatory.

However, such decisions can usually be justified in pursuance of the 'legitimate aims' of Associated Studios.

For Example:

- (a) Inviting only male students to audition for the part of Jesus in a production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*: **A male actor is required for reasons of authenticity. Similar rules excluding men would apply when casting a female part.**

Whilst we support cross-gender casting, this isn't always appropriate.

- (b) Declining a student's application for a musical theatre course on the grounds that the applicant demonstrates a low musical ability during auditions: **The audition process is an objective assessment of talent and skills. Any student – irrespective of their background, could fail an audition on the grounds of ability.**

- (c) Selecting a female member of staff to act as dresser in a female dressing room: **It is reasonable to conclude that a female is required for reasons of decency. It is also reasonable to assume that female students would object to the presence of a male in such circumstances.**
  
- (d) Advertising Associated Studios' Courses in a publication predominantly read by black minority ethnic people: **As part of our commitment promote equality, it is sometimes necessary to target certain groups that are under represented. Providing we also advertise in other 'mainstream' publications, this action is justifiable.**

This list is not exhaustive. If you are in any doubt as to whether a process or decision is discriminatory, you should refer the matter to the Principal for further consideration.