



The Church of Scotland

Faith Nurture Forum – Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Student Policy

Equal Opportunities

1. Introduction

The Faith Nurture Forum of The Church of Scotland (Faith Nurture Forum) is committed to providing the highest quality learning experience for those participating in the IME Programme, and will use its best endeavours to ensure that all students are treated with respect and supported to achieve their full potential governed by principles of equal opportunity.

This policy is intended to assist Faith Nurture Forum to put its commitment to equal opportunities into practice and to avoid unlawful discrimination.

Faith Nurture Forum will strive to ensure that the learning environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Faith Nurture Forum has a separate dignity at study policy, which deals with these issues.

2. The legal position

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics". The Church of Scotland, as a religious organisation, has a genuine occupation requirement that all students participating in the IME programme are required to be Christians and members of the Church of Scotland. This is an exemption under the Equality Act 2010 and a permitted restriction.

3. Types of unlawful discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

Victimisation occurs where an individual is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity, because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a complaint under the Equality Act 2010.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

4. Responsibilities

Every student has the right to respect for their own background and culture and students must respect the background and culture of others. All students are required to assist Faith Nurture Forum to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities and to avoid unlawful discrimination.

Students are expected to behave in a way which respects and appreciates the diversity of the Church of Scotland community and the culture of others within that community.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under Faith Nurture Forum's disciplinary procedure.

Complaints

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use Faith Nurture Forum's IME student grievance procedure to make a complaint.

Faith Nurture Forum will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made maliciously.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored periodically by Faith Nurture Forum to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. In particular, Faith Nurture Forum will monitor the ethnic and gender composition of the existing student body and of applicants for the IME Programme, and the number of people with disabilities within these groups. It will review its equal opportunities policy in accordance with the performance evident through monitoring. If changes are required, Faith Nurture Forum will implement them.

The policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

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Approved by:	E&S Committee