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Prepared and Approved Signed: <u><i>RS</i></u> Robert Sinclair, Principal						
Section/ Page	Issue No	Issue Date	Change Note No	Date Incorporated	Brief Description	
Review Body: Depute Principal/SMT						
Impact Assessment Findings [please tick (✓)]			Low	Medium	High	
Review Body: Quality Team						
This is to certify that this Policy has been Reviewed and Amended as required						
Reviewed By		Date		Depute Principal		

Statement From the Principal

Banff and Buchan College welcomes the recent amendment to Disability Discrimination legislation and the requirement to produce a Disability Equality Scheme. This will support our objective to become a College without disability, where all individuals may participate fully and equally. We aim to be an inclusive organisation where individual differences are respected, where staff and students are treated fairly and where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

We have involved as many people as we can in the preparation of our Disability Equality Scheme and we are grateful to everyone who has participated. Staff, students and members of the public have highlighted a number of areas for improvement as well as those areas that are working well. Together with responses from managers this extensive feedback has enabled us to prioritise some key actions.

We have made significant progress in recent years in ensuring that our buildings are accessible to everyone. We realise there is still work to do to promote disability equality and our Disability Equality Action Plan sets out the steps we will be taking in the next three years in order to make improvements.

We believe that our Disability Equality Scheme will provide the essential framework for promoting disability equality across the College and for making a positive difference to the experiences of our disabled students and staff. We would welcome feedback on our progress in implementing the Scheme and Action Plan.



Robert Sinclair
Principal

Section 1: Promoting Disability Equality

a) Principles of the College Disability Equality Scheme

This Disability Equality Scheme sets out the framework within which the College intends to promote equality for and prevent discrimination against our disabled students, staff and visitors. The College is committed to the following principles

1. Staff and students are entitled to dignity and respect in the workplace and learning environment.
2. The promotion of excellent practice in disability equality and the promotion of the social model of disability across our functions will be core to our activities.
3. The creation of a culture in which the needs of disabled students and staff are viewed as being of equal importance to those of other students and staff, will form an integral part of our mainstream approach to learning, teaching and employment.
4. The creation of an inclusive learning environment and the provision of an accessible curriculum will be at the centre of our delivery of disabled student services.
5. The commitment and involvement of staff and students and other key partners is essential to the implementation of our Disability Equality Scheme.
6. We aim to be a model of best practice in terms of accessibility.

b) Aims

Students

We seek to create an inclusive learning environment which:

- anticipates and reflects the diversity of the collective and individual needs of its disabled student community
- provides a high quality integrated service to disabled students where planning, organisation and the allocation of resources are both efficient and focussed on student need
- enables disabled students to gain maximum benefit from the extensive learning opportunities offered by a diverse curriculum
- ensures that there is clarity and coherence in all aspects of the learning experience of disabled students

Staff

The College is committed to the creation of a diverse workforce, which more accurately reflects the customers and community we serve. The College's aims are to create the conditions where staff are treated solely on the basis of their merits and to ensure that the College is both open to, and representative of, all sections of the community. It is College policy to ensure that disabled applicants and staff receive fair and equal treatment.

Accessible Buildings

The overarching aim is that all property owned, leased or otherwise used by the College is accessible to disabled staff, students and visitors as far as is practicable. All alterations or new build will meet current building regulations regarding accessibility

Section 2: Context**a) Legislative Framework**

There are several pieces of legislation which give rights to disabled people. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 brought in measures to prevent discrimination against disabled people in the areas of employment and services. The Special Educational Needs Act 2001 (SENDA) and the DDA Amendment Act (Further and Higher Education Regulations 2006) detail measures to prevent discrimination in education provision.

Discrimination against disabled people can take place by treating them less favourably than other people and by failing to make a reasonable adjustment where they are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with other people for a reason relating to their disability. The DDA introduced a wide definition of a disabled person as having a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day duties. The DDA required the College to anticipate people's needs and make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to access buildings and services.

The newest piece of legislation, the DDA 2005 introduced a new disability equality duty for the public sector, effective from December 2006, to promote disability equality across all functions. This means that we need to ensure that we continue to build disability equality into everything that we do. The general duty requires that every Public Authority shall in carrying out its functions have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities even where this means treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons (this principle has always been recognised in the DDA, particularly through the duty to make reasonable adjustments, and, for example, in the provision of dedicated services to enable disabled persons to access mainstream activities on equitable terms).

Under the specific duties, there is a requirement to publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) by the 4th December 2006 as a means of delivering the disability equality duty and to involve disabled people in the development of the Scheme. The College's Disability Equality scheme has been developed in line with the requirements of this disability legislation and the associated Disability Rights Commission document 'The Duty to Promote Disability Equality'

b) The College Mission and Strategic Plans

Mission

'To be recognised by key partners and stake holders as the leading provider of vocational training and education in North Aberdeenshire and as making a significant contribution to the economic and social well-being of the area.'

Strategic Plan

The College's strategic plan 2006-09 includes the following aims which are key in the promotion of disability equality -

Develop a challenging and responsive curriculum with a level of support appropriate to the needs of the learner

Ensure an appropriate environment for learning

Encourage and support the continuous professional development of all staff to ensure that they can fully contribute to the aims of the College.

Equality and Diversity Vision

a) Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

Banff and Buchan College is committed to promoting equality and diversity and to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all staff, students and others associated with the College.

In particular the College will

- promote and maintain an inclusive study and work environment which affirms the rights of all individuals to be treated fairly and with respect and affords them opportunities to fulfil their potential
- create a positive culture where there is a shared commitment to value diversity and respect difference
- seek to ensure that people are treated fairly regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, disability, long term health condition, socio-economic background, religion or religious beliefs, political or trade union affiliations, marital status, family responsibilities, gender (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation

Any discriminatory behaviour, including harassment and bullying, by individuals or groups will be regarded extremely seriously and may be grounds for disciplinary action.

The College will continuously review policies and procedures to ensure that they promote behaviours and attitudes which combat discrimination. The College expects staff and students to act in accordance with the equal opportunities principles set out in these policies.

b) The Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability shows that the disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions, but stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers. The Social Model recognises that while some people may have impairments which affect how they function physically or mentally, they are actually disabled by the barriers in society that fail to take proper account of their needs. Barriers can include

- prejudices and stereotypes
- inflexible procedures and practices
- inaccessible information
- inaccessible buildings
- inaccessible transport

The basis of College policy and practice in relation to disabled people and of the development of this DES and action plan is about working towards removing or altering as many of these barriers as possible.

Diversity Group

The Diversity Management Group was originally set up to meet the College duty with regard to the Race Relations Act. Its remit has been broadened to cover all strands of equality. There is a need for an updated equality and diversity policy.

Development of the College's Disability Equality Scheme**1. Current position**

In order to ascertain the current position key College functions were audited using an audit tool (appendix 1) derived from

- Funding Council Document
- DRC Document
- ECU Documents

The following functions were audited

Student services

Admissions
Learner Development
Guidance

Registry

Student funding

HR**Estates****Quality****Special Education Managers****IT****Admissions**

If applicants tick any disability/learning support or health box on the application form, the Admissions Officer alerts the Learner Development Manager via a SITS report and passes a photocopy of the application form to the Learner Development Manager.

Learner Development

A member of Learner Development staff arranges to see the applicant on the same day as they are interviewed for their course. The Learner Development Team is proactive in meeting groups early in the session in order to address in an unthreatening and supportive way the issue of students who do not disclose a disability. Learner Development Manager issues monthly reports to Curriculum. The team also conducts a review of the student experience of Learner Development support.

Guidance

All guidance interviews are recorded. Disability is not recorded so no statistical comparisons can be made. Students may disclose but guidance staff do not ask the specific question. Students may also be referred to guidance by LD where there would be records of disclosed disabilities.

Registry

Information is gathered from enrolment forms for Scottish Funding Council statistics. Retention and withdrawal reports are broken down into gender and age groups, but not by disability. These reports are discussed at senior and sector manager meetings and with curriculum leaders at course team level.

Student funding

Information disclosed on the bursaries application for non advanced courses is forwarded to SM and CL for information. Information about disability for advanced courses is recorded only on the application form. The student funding office does not hold information about HN students who receive Disabled Student Allowance.

Human Resources

All advertisements for posts include Disability User Symbol. The Recruitment and Selection policy (available on our web site) details procedures to ensure fairness in the selection process. The shortlisting panel do not see the personal information of any applicant. Interviewees are asked to contact the Human Resources section if they require any special arrangements. Applicants complete equal opportunities monitoring form and this monitoring data is brought to Board of Management and Senior Management Team. The College Occupational Health Service (OHS) discuss the completed occupational health questionnaire with individuals. College would be informed if OHS recommended any adjustments before the member of staff started work. Sickness absence procedure would pick up any developing health issues.

All staff

- have access to OHS regular surgery in College
- have representation on Partnership Forum, health and safety committee.
- have an annual review meeting with line manager.
- have opportunities to request specific staff development courses.
- are encouraged to participate in staff development opportunities both in house and external.

HR office does not do a statistical analysis comparing disabled and non-disabled staff participation in any of the above.

Estates

The College has made significant adjustments to the physical estate and facilities. These include the purchase of an accessibility minibus, the installation of non slip flooring in all toilets, toilet with hoist and shower, step lift in lecture theatre; handrails were fitted to all stairs and corridor doors were fitted with electromagnetic hold open catches. Ramps were constructed at the front entrance and fire exits. All alterations to the building are DDA compliant. Resources are readily made available for this purpose. Issues are picked up via Health and Safety Committee on which all staff have representation; student surveys; students' association, diversity group, partnership forum.

Quality

Students complete a Quality of Learning and Teaching survey. This was amended to include visual information for students with learning difficulties. The Summer 2005 edition of the College quality team publication On the QT was devoted to disseminating good practice in working with Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities.

Special Education Managers

SEMs attend pupil review meetings at schools before students progress to College. Schools complete a student information sheet. All Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities have a personal learning plan. Students on supported programmes complete the same documentation as all other students – enrolment form, student agreement, QLT surveys. All full time classes have representation on the Student Association. A tailored induction is carried out suitable to the needs of each group.

IT

The IT Manager responds to requests from the Learner Development Team for special software etc.

Recommendations for Gathering Information

The action plan will include targets for monitoring the following information regarding disability

Students

- Applications
- Conversion rates
- Retention rates
- Student achievement
- Work placements
- Incidents relating to disability

Staff

- Applications and appointments
- Nature of contracts
- Grades of posts
- Career development
- Promotion

2. Involvement of Staff, Students and Other Stakeholders

A survey was posted on the College web site. Staff and students were invited via email to complete the questionnaire.

Summary of findings

75% of those responding rated College services as good or excellent
25% rated College services as fair

82% rated access to College as good or excellent
18% rated access to College as fair or poor

Most respondents included comments which were constructive and positive and these have been taken into account in the action plan.

- Space between tables in the refectory and in some teaching rooms create problems for wheelchair users
- Access to toilet facilities
- Specialist equipment eg chairs for those with back problems
- Access to Peterhead Learning Centre
- Difficulties in negotiating heavy traffic in corridors

Focus groups were set up with local groups of disabled people, many of whom had accessed, or were currently accessing, College services. There was a noticeable difference in opinion, however, between those who accessed College courses in local day centres and those who came to College on a day, or part day, release basis. All groups were very satisfied with the courses they had done and were very positive about College staff meeting their needs.

Several of those who came to College reported problems with corridor traffic and sometimes the attitudes of mainstream students. One or two felt intimidated in corridors. Arrangements have been made to meet groups again to explore these issues in more detail.

Impact Assessment

All senior managers attended a one day training event on impact assessment delivered by SFEU.

Policies will be impact assessed in accordance with the College Guide to development and Implementation of Policies (available on our web site).

An Impact Assessment is a review of a policy or procedure which establishes whether the policy or procedure has a negative effect or impact on particular social groups. This assessment is made through a variety of means that may include:

- Focus Groups and Feedback
- Statistical Analysis, Census Data and Reviews of Complaints
- Qualitative Data collected through surveys or research
- Analytical discussion
- Piloting new ways of working
- Consulting with key stakeholders/special interest groups

The assessment conducted should result in the promotion of equality of opportunity. It is the outcomes of the Impact Assessment that make it a valuable tool, not the process in itself.

The primary purpose of IA is to determine:

- the extent of differential impact upon different groups in society
- whether any differential impact is adverse
- if there are alternative policies which remove the adverse impact
- whether there are measures which can be employed to reduce the adverse impact

Current practice is that as policies will be impact assessed as they enter their triennial review period. However, in order to fulfil the obligations of the DES, a prioritised list of policies for impact assessment should be seen as a clear action point.

Implementation and Action Plan

Monitoring, Publishing and Review Arrangements

The DES and Action Plan will be published on bnet (College intranet) and on the College website.

The Scheme will be reviewed in its entirety every three years. The Diversity Management Group will monitor progress on action points annually and this will be included as part of the College Equal Opportunities annual report. The Depute Principal will monitor progress of named individuals with responsibility for specific actions. The Diversity Group and Board of Management Staffing Committee will monitor reports of staff and student data. Where information shows that policies and practices are not working effectively, we will make appropriate changes.

There will be ongoing involvement with disabled staff and students to monitor the effectiveness of our DES and action plan; to identify what is going well, what could be improved upon and any other priorities for action.

We would welcome feedback on this DES. We need to know how effective the Scheme and Action Plan are in promoting and delivering disability equality. Feedback can be sent to Jean Ritchie, Quality Admin Assistant, BBC, Henderson Road, Fraserburgh. jritchie@banff-buchan.ac.uk

Appendix 1 - Test your Eq – Student

1. What information do we currently gather regarding the experiences of disabled students?
 - Data regarding recruitment, enrolment, progression and retention of disabled students
 - Mechanisms for encouraging students to disclose relevant information about their disabilities; how that information is used
 - How we can encourage a culture of inclusiveness and disclosure
 - What methods (formal/informal) we currently employ to consult with disabled students about their experiences of studying at the College
 - What mechanisms are in place to assess any differences between the learning experiences of disabled and non-disabled students
 - How reliable, accurate and comprehensive the information is and how might the collection of information be improved

2. To what extent is the information used for development or future planning purposes?
 - Recruitment and admissions policies and procedures; promotional material; selection mechanisms
 - Induction for disabled students
 - Mechanisms for ensuring that disability related matters are considered in all areas of decision making, policy development, resource allocation, staff development
 - Ways in which we could build on or improve existing data gathering and student consultation processes

3. Which policies and practice areas are likely to impact most on the experiences of disabled students?
 - How will we prioritise policies for impact assessment
 - How will we ensure that future decisions at all levels include disabled people to gauge how these decisions may impact on them
 - What progress have we made in the last 3-5 years to ensure that disabled students' needs / circumstances are considered in policies and practices and what evidence do we have?

4. Responsibilities
 - Senior management responsibilities
 - Day to day management of disability related issues for students
 - Disability Equality Scheme
5. What processes are in place for academic staff to anticipate the needs of disabled students in the design and delivery of their courses?
6. How does the College disseminate good practice regarding course design?
7. Who has key responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of disabled students are met?
8. What plans are there for engaging disabled students in the process of drawing up the Disability Equality Scheme?
9. Have all staff undertaken disability equality training?
10. How do we support disabled students to engage with careers services in order to identify potential employment opportunities?
11. What training do careers staff receive for advising disabled students?

Consider these questions also in relation to disabled members of the public.

Test Your Eq – HR

1. What information do you currently gather regarding the experiences of disabled staff?
 - Monitoring data regarding the recruitment, appointment and promotion of disabled members of staff
 - Mechanisms for ensuring the data collected can in fact give evidence about disability
 - Mechanisms for encouraging members of staff to disclose relevant information about any disability that may affect their work and how such information is used
 - What methods you currently employ to consult with disabled staff about their experience of working for the College
 - How reliable / accurate / comprehensive is this information and how might it be improved?
2. To what extent is this information used for development or future planning purposes?

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- Recruitment policies including advertising, job descriptions, interview and selection processes
 - Mechanisms in place to ensure that the views of disabled staff are given appropriate consideration in all decision making processes
 - Mechanisms in place to assess any differences between the experiences of disabled and non-disabled members of staff

 - Mechanisms for ensuring that disability-related matters are considered in all areas of decision making and policy development, including planning, resource allocation, staff development
3. Does our organisation discriminate against disabled people during our recruitment process whether intentionally or unintentionally?
- Info required about
- Level of training required of staff involved in recruitment and selection
 - The views of disabled applicants, both successful and unsuccessful
 - Content and design of application form and interview questions
 - The way in which we make reasonable adjustments to our recruitment arrangements
- Data required
- Percentage of recruitment and selection staff who have received disability equality training
 - Percentage of disabled and non disabled applicants who are successful / unsuccessful
 - Feedback from disabled applicants both successful and unsuccessful
4. Do the different recruitment methods we use eg presentations, have a tendency to disadvantage disabled people
5. Are our positive action programmes such as 'Two Ticks' successful in increasing the number of disabled people we attract to the College?
6. Are disabled people likely to be less well paid than non disabled people when they first start work in College?
7. Are disabled staff accessing the full range of development opportunities available to our employees? Info and data required -
- % attendance on training courses, career development programmes
 - How staff are alerted to the existence of training / staff development
 - How access requirements are met
 - Career progression of disabled staff

8. Staff retention – info and data required
 - % on different types of contract
 - Job security of disabled staff
 - Evidence of reasonable adjustments made
 - How satisfied are disabled staff with working in College
9. Disability related bullying and harassment?
 - Evidence of complaints and grievances containing a disability-related element
10. What plans do you have for developing mechanisms for consulting with disabled staff and for engaging them in the process of drawing up the College Disability Equality Scheme?
11. Are disabled staff satisfied with their experience when using Occupational Health service?
12. Have all staff undertaken disability equality training?

Eq – Estates

- What is your policy on signage and information systems – outdoor and indoor signage, physical and electronic maps – for disabled students and visitors?
- What specialised advice do you seek about making lab / workshop space and specialist equipment available to disabled students and staff?
- What are your emergency evacuation procedures for disabled people?
- What adjustments have you made to allow disabled people full access to library and IT facilities?
- If alterations to all areas are currently not feasible, what alternative arrangements are in place so disabled students and staff can access classes etc
- What access audit tools do you use to ensure that the physical estate and facilities such as doors, car parking, toilets and signage are regularly checked to ensure they are operating effectively?
- How do you ensure that health and safety procedures take account of the needs of disabled people?
- How do you incorporate the views of students, staff and the public in the development of services and facilities?
- Are sufficient resources available to make the necessary physical adjustments?
- How do you gather feedback from disabled people on the usefulness of any adjustments that have been made to the physical estate?