



**“Enabling Students to Accomplish their Academic Goal”**

## **Equal Opportunities Policy Relating to Employment**

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**Contents:**

- 1. Introduction..... 3**
- 2. Purpose of the Policy..... 3**
- 4. Scope of the Policy..... 4**
- 5. Policy Statement..... 5**
- 6. Principles of Equal Opportunity..... 5**
- 7. Recruitment and Selection..... 6**
- 8. Training, Development and Promotion..... 6**
- 9. Reasonable Adjustments and Inclusive Working Practices..... 7**
- 10. Harassment, Bullying, Victimisation and Dignity at Work..... 7**
- 11. Roles and Responsibilities..... 8**
- 12. Concerns, Complaints and Breaches..... 9**
- 13. Monitoring, Records and Review..... 9**
- 14. Governance and Committee Oversight..... 10**
- 15. Conclusion..... 10**

**1. Introduction**

Bellmont College is committed to providing an inclusive, fair and respectful working environment in which all employees, workers, applicants, contractors and others working with the College are treated with dignity and are able to contribute to the College’s mission. Equal opportunity supports staff wellbeing, effective teaching and professional services, and the quality of the student experience.

This policy sets out the College’s expectations for employment practice and should be read alongside staff conduct, contractual and operational expectations set out in *(HRP2 Belmont College Employee Handbook)*.

Equality, inclusion and diversity are central to the way Belmont College recruits, supports, develops and promotes staff. The College values individual differences and seeks to ensure that no person is treated less favourably, disadvantaged, harassed or victimised because of a protected characteristic or because they raise a genuine equality concern.

**2. Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for promoting equal opportunity in employment, preventing unlawful discrimination, and ensuring that employment decisions are fair, transparent, evidence-based and consistent with Belmont College’s values.

This policy also supports the College’s wider regulatory responsibilities as a higher education provider. Although the policy focuses on employment, fair and inclusive staffing practice contributes to effective governance, academic quality, student support and equality of opportunity for students. It therefore supports the OfS general conditions relating to management and governance, resources, support and student engagement, and equality of opportunity where applicable.

**3. Regulatory and Legal Framework**

Requirement	Relevance to this policy
Equality Act 2010	Supports protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and reasonable adjustments for applicants and staff.

Requirement	Relevance to this policy
Public Sector Equality Duty principles	Inform fair, inclusive and accessible practice where applicable to College functions, partnerships or public-facing activity.
Employment Rights Act 1996 and related employment legislation	Supports fair employment decisions, staff rights and transparent employment processes.
UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018	Supports lawful and secure handling of equality monitoring information, employment records and special category data.
Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974	Supports dignity, wellbeing, safe working conditions and reasonable adjustments where equality and safety overlap.
Office for Students regulatory framework	Supports governance, management, resources, student support and equality of opportunity where applicable.
UK Quality Code for Higher Education	Supports inclusive learning environments, effective governance and enhancement of the student experience.
Competition and Markets Authority expectations	Supports clear, fair and accurate information and accessible processes where staff actions affect applicants or students.

**4. Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to all stages of the employment relationship, including recruitment, selection, appointment, induction, probation, training, appraisal, promotion, work

allocation, flexible working, conduct, grievance, disciplinary matters, termination of employment and post-employment references where applicable.

The policy applies to all employees, workers, agency staff, consultants, contractors, volunteers, job applicants and any person involved in College employment decisions or working on behalf of Belmont College. It also applies to interactions with students, partner institutions, suppliers, visitors and members of the public where those interactions take place in connection with College business.

Where staff responsibilities relate to students, inclusive conduct and safeguarding expectations must also be followed in line with (*HSP1 Belmont College Safeguarding and PREVENT Policy*).

## **5. Policy Statement**

Belmont College recognises that discrimination is unacceptable and is committed to maintaining a working environment in which no employee, worker, applicant or contractor feels under threat, intimidated or excluded. The College will actively support equality, inclusion and diversity and will ensure that staff are valued and treated with dignity and respect.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that no job applicant, employee, worker or person acting for the College is discriminated against directly or indirectly because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Breaches of this policy may be treated seriously and may lead to action under relevant employment procedures, including disciplinary action up to and including dismissal where appropriate.

Where behaviour raises concerns about staff conduct, dignity at work, harassment, discrimination or professional standards, the matter will be considered in accordance with (*HRP2 Belmont College Employee Handbook*) and relevant HR procedures.

## **6. Principles of Equal Opportunity**

Belmont College will apply the following principles in employment and workplace practice:

- employment decisions will be based on merit, role requirements, objective evidence and fair process;
- staff and applicants will be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect;
- reasonable adjustments will be considered for disabled applicants and staff to remove or reduce barriers where practicable;
- staff development, promotion and progression opportunities will be made available fairly and transparently;
- bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination will not be tolerated;

- equality monitoring information will be used responsibly to support improvement and will not be used unfairly in individual employment decisions;
- the College will encourage a culture in which staff can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

These principles align with the College's wider approach to inclusive education, fair treatment and student support set out in (*SWP1 Belmont College Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*).

## **7. Recruitment and Selection**

Bellmont College recognises that recruitment and selection are critical to equal opportunity. The College will take reasonable steps to ensure that vacancy advertising, job descriptions, person specifications, shortlisting, interviews and appointment decisions are fair, consistent and based on the requirements of the role.

Staff involved in recruitment and selection will be expected to avoid conscious or unconscious discrimination and to use objective, role-related criteria. Job descriptions and person specifications will be reviewed as appropriate to ensure that requirements are relevant, proportionate and do not unlawfully disadvantage any group.

The College will not restrict recruitment to sources that are likely to attract only, or mainly, applicants from a particular group unless there is a lawful and objectively justified reason. Applicants will be considered on their ability to perform the role, with reasonable adjustments made where appropriate to support access to the recruitment process.

Shortlisting and interviewing should normally involve more than one person where practicable. Interview questions should be linked to the role and should not be discriminatory. Selection decisions must not be influenced by assumptions, stereotypes or perceived prejudices of other staff.

Any conflicts of interest in recruitment or selection must be declared and managed in accordance with (*BCP8 Belmont College Conflict of Interest Policy*).

## **8. Training, Development and Promotion**

Bellmont College is committed to supporting staff development and fair progression. Training and promotion decisions will be made on merit, business need, role requirements and objective evidence of capability, contribution and potential.

Senior staff and staff with line management or recruitment responsibilities will receive appropriate guidance on this policy and their responsibilities. All staff are expected to engage with relevant training, including equality, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, data protection, health and safety and other mandatory development activities.

Staff development opportunities will be supported and monitored through the College's development arrangements, including induction, mandatory training, peer observation

where relevant and continuing professional development set out in (*HRP1 Belmont College Staff Development Plan*).

Promotion and advancement will be conducted in accordance with the principles of this policy. Decisions will be evidence-based and will not be influenced by protected characteristics or assumptions about a person's circumstances, commitments, health, disability, age, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, religion, belief, sex or any other protected characteristic.

## **9. Reasonable Adjustments and Inclusive Working Practices**

Bellmont College will consider reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and staff where a workplace practice, physical feature, technology, communication method or other arrangement places them at a substantial disadvantage. The College will consider each request fairly and proportionately, taking account of the individual's needs, role requirements, available resources and operational context.

Reasonable adjustments may include changes to the recruitment process, adjustments to workstations or equipment, accessible formats, changes to working arrangements where appropriate, additional support, phased return arrangements, or other practical steps designed to remove or reduce barriers.

Where adjustments relate to health, safety, wellbeing or working conditions, the College will also consider relevant responsibilities under (*HSP2 Belmont College Health and Safety Policy*).

## **10. Harassment, Bullying, Victimisation and Dignity at Work**

Bellmont College will not tolerate harassment, bullying, victimisation or conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This includes behaviour related to a protected characteristic, sexual harassment, retaliation against a person who raises a concern, or behaviour that undermines dignity at work.

All staff are expected to behave professionally and respectfully towards colleagues, students, applicants, visitors, contractors and partners. Inappropriate comments, exclusionary behaviour, discriminatory assumptions, offensive jokes, unwanted conduct, abuse of authority or misuse of digital communication may be treated as misconduct.

Staff who believe they have experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation may raise the matter through the relevant routes in (*CAP3 Belmont College Complaint and Appeal Policy and Procedure*) or, where it relates to staff employment matters, through the appropriate HR procedure set out in the staff handbook.

## 11. Roles and Responsibilities

Role / Body	Responsibilities
Board of Directors	Retains governance oversight for equality, inclusion, employment standards, institutional accountability and fair decision-making.
Chief Executive Officer	Leads an inclusive culture and ensures the College resources and implements fair employment practice effectively.
Senior Management Committee	Oversees operational implementation, reviews key employment and HR issues, and ensures appropriate action is taken in response to risks or concerns.
Head of Quality and Operations	Coordinates policy review, monitors implementation through quality and governance processes, and ensures equality considerations inform continuous improvement.
Head of IT and Human Resources	Applies this policy in recruitment, induction, staff development, performance management, conduct, workplace adjustments and employment record keeping.
Line Managers	Apply this policy fairly in recruitment, work allocation, development, performance, conduct and workplace adjustment decisions.

Role / Body	Responsibilities
All Staff	Treat others with dignity and respect, comply with this policy, complete required training, report concerns appropriately and contribute to an inclusive working and learning environment.

**12. Concerns, Complaints and Breaches**

Staff, applicants or others covered by this policy are encouraged to raise concerns promptly where they believe that equal opportunity principles have not been followed. Informal resolution may be appropriate in some cases, but serious concerns, repeated behaviour or allegations of discrimination, harassment or victimisation should be escalated through the appropriate formal process.

Bellmont College will treat concerns fairly, sensitively and confidentially as far as reasonably possible. Individuals must not be victimised for raising a concern in good faith, supporting another person’s concern, or participating in an investigation.

Where a concern involves wrongdoing, concealment, regulatory risk or a public interest issue, staff may use the reporting arrangements set out in *(BCP2 Belmont College Whistleblowing and Public Concern Policy)*.

Where a breach is established, appropriate action may include guidance, training, mediation, management action, disciplinary action, changes to practice or other corrective measures.

**13. Monitoring, Records and Review**

Bellmont College will maintain and review employment records to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. Monitoring may include recruitment outcomes, training and promotion records, staff development participation, complaints or concerns, and other relevant employment data.

Equality monitoring may involve collecting and analysing information about protected characteristics where lawful and appropriate. Such information will be used to identify trends, improve practice, support equality of opportunity and meet legal or regulatory expectations. It will not be used to make unfair decisions about individuals.

All monitoring and employment records will be handled securely and retained only as necessary in accordance with *(BCP6 Belmont College General Data Protection and Regulation (GDPR) Policy)*.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually, or earlier where there are changes in law, regulation, institutional structure, partner requirements, or evidence from monitoring that indicates improvement is required.

**14. Governance and Committee Oversight**

<b>Committee / Body</b>	<b>How it implements this policy</b>
Board of Directors	Approves the policy, receives assurance through management and quality reporting, and maintains strategic oversight of equality, inclusion and governance.
Senior Management Committee	Oversees operational implementation, reviews key employment and HR issues where relevant, and ensures actions are taken in response to risks or concerns.
Quality Committee	Considers equality-related themes where they affect academic quality, student experience, staff development, student support or compliance with the quality assurance framework.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee	Reviews equality, inclusion, reasonable adjustment, harassment, discrimination and staff development themes to support continuous improvement.
Audit and Risk Committee	Reviews equality-related institutional risks, compliance concerns, audit findings and systemic issues requiring escalation.

**15. Conclusion**

Bellmont College is committed to embedding equal opportunity in employment practice and to maintaining a respectful, inclusive and professional working environment. This

policy supports fair treatment, lawful decision-making, staff development, good governance and the quality of the student experience.

All staff and those working on behalf of the College are expected to understand and apply this policy in their daily work. By doing so, Belmont College aims to create a workplace where people feel valued, supported and able to contribute fully to the College’s mission.

<b>Bellmont College Equal Opportunities Policy Relating to Employment</b>					
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Amendments</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Next review</b>
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