



cavan
institute

EQUAL STATUS Policy

March 2012

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Introduction

Mission and Vision of Cavan Institute

Cavan Institute's mission and vision statements are as follows:

Mission

Cavan Institute's mission is to deliver excellence in further education and training so that students, staff and the wider community can achieve their potential.

Vision

The Institute is committed to:

- providing nationally and internationally recognised programmes of study that bridge the transition to employment or higher education
- fostering a caring, inclusive and responsive learning environment and a culture of innovation and collaboration
- promoting and providing access to lifelong learning
- enhancing the social, economic and cultural development of the region.

Equality Statement

Cavan Institute, as part of CMETB, is an equal opportunities employer and education provider. We recognise that in our society certain groups and individuals are discriminated against and denied equality of opportunity. The management and staff of the Institute aim to create an environment in which equal opportunity is promoted to allow the development of the full potential of each person involved in or taught by our organisation and to ensure that no person is treated less favourably on any of the nine legally protected grounds as listed below.

As part of our commitment to equality of opportunity, we are committed to promoting an environment free of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, victimisation or bullying¹. It is recognised that harassment and bullying can seriously damage working and social conditions, and it will not be tolerated at any time in Cavan Institute. The Institute will investigate through its different management structures and reporting procedures any reported statement or behaviour which may be interpreted as discriminatory, reinforcing stereotypes or that is in any way derogatory to an individual². We respect, value and accommodate diversity across all nine grounds in the equality legislation.

Cavan Institute adheres to the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012 and the Equality Act 2004. To ensure that the policy is effective and that no service user³ receives less favourable treatment, the organisation will promote equality of opportunity and prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, as per the above Acts:

- gender
- civil status
- family status
- sexual orientation
- religion
- age
- disability
- race
- membership of the traveller community

¹ Refer to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005-2012 for legislation on bullying

² See Cavan Institute's "Anti-Bullying" policy and procedures

³ A "service user" in the context of this document is taken to include students, staff and other stakeholders or groups that interact with the Institute (external and internal).

Together, the Equal Status Act 2000-2012⁴ and the Equality Act 2004⁵:

- promote equality of opportunity
- prohibit discrimination subject to exemptions on nine specified grounds
- prohibit sexual harassment, harassment and victimisation
- require the reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities and allow for a broad range of positive action measures.

The Acts apply to people who:

- buy and sell a wide variety of goods
- use or provide a wide range of services
- obtain or dispose of accommodation
- attend at or are in charge of educational establishments.

Further information on the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2012 can be obtained from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's information service. Lo-call: 1890 245545, Tel: 01 858 3000, email YourRights@ihrec.ie or website www.ihrec.ie. It has also published a useful guide to the acts called "[Your Equal Status Rights Explained](#)".

The Equal Status Acts 2004-2012 apply to Cavan Institute where it provides a wide range of services to the public, including educational/learning services and support.

⁴ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/print>

⁵ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/24/enacted/en/html>

1. Scope of Policy

1.1 CMETB and Cavan Institute endeavour to provide an excellent service to all our service users⁶.

1.2 We seek to equip all our staff with the skills and knowledge needed to deal confidently with equality issues and to be professional in our working relationships with service users.

1.3 We desire to have a well-motivated workforce which takes pride in its work.

1.4 This Equal Status Policy sets out our commitment to meet our obligations under the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012 and the Equality Act 2004 to proactively promote equality and to work to prevent discrimination.

In this we seek to ensure that:

- the service we provide is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation
- all service users, contractors and employees are treated with respect and dignity
- the services we provide are accessible and relevant
- the Institute accommodates diversity and seeks to meet needs specific to particular groups of service users
- the Institute seeks to benefit all service users by promoting equality and implementing positive action
- discrimination, sexual harassment or harassment of or by the staff employed at Cavan Institute and non-employees, such as visitors and business contacts, will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action⁷ (in the case of employees) and other sanctions, for example the suspension of contracts or services or exclusion from premises (in the case of non-employees).

⁶ A “service user” in the context of this document is taken to include students, staff and other stakeholders or groups that interact with the Institute (external and internal).

⁷ See CMETB’s disciplinary procedures

- complaints will be treated with fairness and sensitivity and in as confidential a manner as possible. This policy should be read and operated in conjunction with CMETB's policies on health and safety, sexual harassment, harassment, bullying and employment equality, and its code of practice for complaints, and Cavan Institute's policies on health and safety and anti-bullying. Policies are available via the Institute's Intranet, SharePoint, some are available in summary in the student handbook and in hard copy from the administration office.
- Cavan Institute has adopted and implemented this policy after consultation about its content with staff and service users.

2. Publications and Materials

- 2.1 Cavan Institute strives to provide all its materials in a relevant and accessible manner to people from across the nine grounds.
- 2.2 We strive to provide materials in alternative formats.

3. Reasonable Accommodation

- 3.1 Cavan Institute has an obligation to reasonably accommodate service users with disabilities by providing special treatment or facilities so that it is not impossible or unduly difficult for the service user to avail of the Institute's services.⁸
- 3.2 Staff will explore necessary adjustments with service users who have disabilities to access any necessary advice or support and the Institute will strive to secure implementation of such adjustments.
- 3.3 The Institute will identify contact points to ensure that we have on-going access to the knowledge required to make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.
- 3.4 Cavan Institute ensures that the physical environment is accessible and seeks to

⁸ However, according to The Equality Acts 2004-2012 they are not obliged to provide special facilities or treatment when this costs more than what is called a nominal cost. What amounts to nominal costs will depend on the circumstances such as the size and resources of the organisation involved.

- avoid barriers such as narrow doorways, steep staircases, a cluttered layout, poor lighting and signage.
- 3.5 Cavan Institute endeavours to ensure that staff do not use inappropriate or disrespectful language.
 - 3.6 Cavan Institute endeavours to ensure that staff do not display patronising attitudes and make assumptions about people's abilities or inabilities.
 - 3.7 Each person has unique needs and must be considered, assessed and accommodated individually. On occasions, it may be appropriate to ask service users to identify whether they have any particular requirements.
 - 3.8 Cavan Institute provides an environment where a person with a disability can identify what their needs are and how these might best be met through dialogue with staff.
 - 3.9 The director of the Institute has the responsibility to ensure that service users with disabilities are reasonably accommodated.

4. Promoting Diversity

- 4.1 Cavan Institute endeavours to address the specific needs of its service users from all the grounds covered by this policy in order to enable them to avail of services.
- 4.2 We endeavour to ensure a physical environment that is welcoming and accessible to all, taking initiatives such as events, services and promotional campaigns using art and posters on walls to reflect this commitment.
- 4.3 We encourage all service users to attend equality related training and events.

5. Service User Relations

- 5.1 We provide our services in a considerate, courteous and open manner and we are straightforward, consistent and professional.
- 5.2 We are committed to providing an environment that is free from any form of

discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation.

- 5.3 We seek to treat all service users fairly and not to discriminate, while respecting individual differences and needs.
- 5.4 We are committed to creating an environment in which all service users are treated with dignity and respect.
- 5.5 Service users will not be penalised or treated less favourably because of pursuing rights by way of taking action, supporting action or giving notice of intention to take/support action under equality legislation.

6. Service User Feedback

- 6.1 We encourage the participation of our service users to provide feedback in relation to this policy.
- 6.2 We continue to provide proactive service user feedback mechanisms which may include the use of evaluations, comment cards, suggestion boxes, questionnaires or dialogue.

7. Communications Strategy

- 7.1 We endeavour to ensure that people across the nine grounds are aware of our service through various forms of communication including online and offline publications, leaflets and flyers.
- 7.2 We have joined networks and mailing lists on equality issues to bring equality news into the organisation.
- 7.3 Equality is embedded in our strategic plan and in our Quality Assurance procedures.

8. Outcomes

- 8.1 We seek positive experiences and outcomes for all service users across the nine grounds. Outcomes include access, participation, personal development and

achieving education credentials.

- 8.2 This is reflected in our commitment to equality and the way in which we prioritise our work, use positive action measures targeting specific groups and invest in the promotion of diversity.

9. Advertising

- 9.1 We will keep all advertising under review to ensure that it complies with the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012, that it includes a positive reflection of diversity and that it promotes equality.
- 9.2 It is our policy to avoid displaying, intentionally or unintentionally, advertisements or wordings that discriminate or unnecessarily exclude individuals or groups from any of the grounds covered by this policy.

10. Policy Responsibility

- 10.1 The board of management of Cavan Institute, together with the director and deputy directors, are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Equal Status Policy.
- 10.2 The director and senior management of the Institute are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the Equal Status Policy within the organisation in order to:
- assess whether the aims of the Equal Status Policy are being achieved
 - measure the effect of action taken to promote and support that policy
 - highlight areas where further action is required
 - provide relevant and up to date information to staff and volunteers on equality issues
- 10.3 Management and staff have a particular responsibility to ensure that discrimination against Cavan Institute's service users does not occur and that equality is promoted.

Management and staff should:

- provide good example by treating service users with courtesy and respect
- promote awareness of the equality policies and procedures
- be vigilant for signs of discrimination and take action before it escalates
- respond sensitively to a service user who makes a complaint of discrimination
- explain the procedures to be followed if a complaint of discrimination is made
- ensure that a service user making a complaint is not victimised for doing so
- monitor and follow up the situation after a complaint is made so that discrimination does not recur.

10.4 All service users⁹ can contribute to achieving an environment free from all forms of discrimination and to promoting equality through compliance with policies and procedures. Discrimination¹⁰, sexual harassment, harassment, victimisation and bullying of or by service users will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action.

11. Policy Communication

- 11.1 Cavan Institute is committed to the effective communication of this policy.
- 11.2 All Cavan Institute staff will be made aware of the policy at staff meetings and through the ongoing work of management.
- 11.3 New Cavan Institute staff will be made aware of the policy as part of the formal induction process.
- 11.4 A summary of the policy will be prominently displayed in the reception area, the open learning centre, staff rooms and administration offices.
- 11.5 Discrimination against service users by contract service providers will not be tolerated and may lead to termination of contracts, or suspension of services, or

⁹ A “service user” in the context of this document is taken to include students, staff and other stakeholders or groups that interact with the Institute (external and internal).

¹⁰ See CMETB’s Codes of Practice for dealing with Complaints of Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Harassment in CMETB Workplaces.

exclusion from the premises or the imposition of other sanctions (as appropriate).

- 11.6 We aim to provide training to staff on equality issues related to the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation, on the prevention of discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation.
- 11.7 We aim to provide training on effective strategies in accommodating diversity and promoting equality.
- 11.8 Information in relation to this policy will be provided to service users.

12. Monitoring

- 12.1 Cavan Institute will develop practices and procedures on foot of this policy. The director and senior management will monitor and report on their impact.
- 12.2 We will undertake, on our own initiative, an equality review in our organisation and will prepare an equality action plan.
- 12.3 The development of an equality review will include the collection and recording of information. Any data collected as part of ongoing monitoring will be compliant with GDPR.

13. Complaints

- 13.1 We will endeavour to provide an excellent service to all our service users. In so doing, we also maintain an accessible, easy-to-use system for dealing with any complaints about the service we provide¹¹.
- 13.2 We ensure that service users with a complaint initially have access to the local management to seek resolution of the difficulty, if possible. The local management will also inform the service user of the time limits under the Act.
- 14.3 The director of the Institute acts as the contact for service users dissatisfied with the local management's response to a complaint.

¹¹ See CMETB's *Customer Service Policy* and *National Guidelines for Dealing with Complaints*

15. Review

15.1 We are committed to:

- keeping this policy under review
- monitoring outcomes across the grounds
- reporting in our Strategic Plan on its implementation and on any positive action taken.