

# techspert.io Equality and Diversity Policy

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## Guiding statement

techspert.io is committed to encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination both as an employer and a provider of services. We aim to create an environment and company culture that respects and values the differences between people, and enables all individuals to feel valued and welcomed regardless of background, without fear of discrimination, harassment or bullying.

## Purpose

This policy seeks to:

- Provide for equality, fairness, welcoming and respect for all in our employment.
- Ensure that techspert.io never approaches unlawful or unacceptable discrimination against any person.

We therefore seek to avoid unacceptable or unlawful discrimination based on any *grounds*, both:

- Discrimination defined as unlawful in the Equality Act 2010 – namely when based on the nine protected characteristics of age, sex/gender identity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy, gender reassignment/transgendered status, sexual orientation, religion/belief and disability.
- Any other discrimination that might reasonably have the effect of making a person (in actuality, perception or feeling) less advantaged or welcome than otherwise, on the basis of any personal characteristic (except where it is directly relevant to the performance of core aspects of their duties). This includes both the nine legally protected characteristics, and any other basis for unreasonable discrimination, including but not limited to: parenthood, caring responsibilities, social background/class, physical appearance/attractiveness, size, medical needs relating to either physical or mental health, linguistic background/accent, educational background, spent convictions, union membership, or reasonable political or other beliefs or affiliation.

Unacceptable or unlawful discrimination should also be opposed in all *forms*:

- This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, leave for medical reasons, requests for flexible working; selection for employment, promotion, training

or other developmental opportunities; company culture, language and personal interactions.

- This includes, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, direct discrimination, indirect discrimination (through procedures and practices that have disproportionate negative impact on some on the basis of some personal characteristic), discrimination by association (i.e. discrimination on the basis of personal characteristics held by those with whom a person is in some way associated, rather than characteristics of the person themselves), and discrimination by perception (discrimination on the basis of perceived characteristics, regardless of whether the person in question in fact possesses that characteristic).

## General responsibilities

In order to achieve the purposes of this policy, techspert.io commits to:

- Inform and, where necessary, train all employees as to their rights and responsibilities under this equality policy.
- Take seriously any complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by employees, clients, suppliers, visitors or the general public in the company's workplace or activities, as detailed below.
- Review this policy and all employment practices and procedures regularly and whenever necessary to ensure fairness, and to keep them up to date to take account of changes in the law.
- To regularly give employees opportunity to express concerns relating to equality, inclusion and fairness, and to hear such concerns in an objective fashion, taking action where appropriate and in accordance with the Policy Purpose.

## Responsibilities of Employees

All employees carry a personal responsibility for their own behaviour and for ensuring that their conduct is in accordance with the principles set out in this policy, especially as codified in the Code of Conduct below.

In addition, each person has a responsibility to report any instance of bullying or harassment which they witness or which comes to their attention.

All staff should understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

## Code of Conduct

In accordance with the Purpose of this policy, techspert.io's workplace should be equal, positive, forward-moving, supportive and inclusive.

In the interests of achieving and preserving such an environment, employees should:

- Be friendly and patient. Consider others' feelings.

- Be welcoming to all, regardless of who is present. techspert.io aims to be a company that welcomes and supports people of all backgrounds and identities. Many identities are invisible, and environments can be unwelcoming out empathy or concern for others.
  - As stated above, this may include ethnic, national or cultural origin, social class, educational background, gender identity or expression, religious beliefs (or lack thereof), disability, political belief, sexual/romantic orientation, mental or physical health, age, dietary choices, physical appearance, size, attractiveness, accent, marriage, or parenthood.
- Be careful of the words they choose. Harassment, bullying or other exclusionary behaviour are not acceptable. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Violent threats or language directed against another person, or personal insults.
  - Discriminatory jokes and language, or unnecessary stereotyping.
  - Intrusive questioning on irrelevant topics.
  - Any language, whether joking, threatening or otherwise, that is racist, sexist, ableist, or otherwise directed at a particular background or identity against which techspert.io is committed not to discriminate.
  - Unwelcome sexual attention.
  - Advocating or encouraging any of the above behaviour.
  - Use of social media sites to ridicule, harass or bully.
  - Exclusion of an individual from work-related or social activities or conversations in which they have a right or legitimate expectation to participate.
- Respect personal space. Unwelcome physical contact, ranging from, touching or brushing against another's body, to physical coercion or assault, is unacceptable.
- Respect others' wishes. If someone asks for something to stop, it should stop.
- Resolve disagreements and have discussions productively. The purpose of discussion should be to collaboratively reach a goal – such as the truth, or the solution to a problem – not to win. Accept when you are wrong, learn from mistakes, value different perspectives, respond to the substance of someone's statement rather than how it was expressed, criticise each other supportively.

Contraventions of this Code of Conduct may constitute bullying or harassment, and are thus disciplinary offences and will be dealt with according to the company's Disciplinary Procedure.

## Bullying and Harassment

techspert.io commits to take seriously any complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by its employees.

### Definitions

- The Equality Act 2010 defines harassment as unwanted behaviour that has the purpose or effect of violating person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a person, when this is related to one of the legally protected characteristics of age, disability, gender re-assignment/transgender status, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, or sexual orientation.
- Furthermore, sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature whatsoever.
- Bullying is not defined by law. techspert.io recognises a wide definition of bullying as any offensive or exclusive and unwanted behaviour which violates a person's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, threatening, offensive or unwelcoming environment, or which humiliates or undermines an individual or group.
- Victimisation is defined as treating someone unfavourably due to their having raised an issue, complaint or grievance in the past.
- Any such behaviour will be taken especially seriously when it constitutes illegal harassment on the grounds of one of the legally protected personal characteristics, however, in accordance with the Policy Purpose, techspert.io commits to taking seriously any exclusionary or unwelcoming behaviour, much more widely defined.

### Responsibilities of the company

- The company, and especially management staff, have an obligation to prevent harassment/bullying and to swiftly investigate when it has been identified, taking action when appropriate, whether or not an official complaint has been made. Instances and allegations of bullying and harassment will be dealt with as misconduct under our grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- Allegations of harassment or bullying, received either informally or formally, must be dealt with promptly and sensitively.
- All matters relating to the investigation of complaints of harassments or bullying will be treated in strict confidence. Only those who need to know should be informed of such proceedings, and only because they have a role in providing support or progressing action to stop the bullying or harassment.

## Grievances

- Employee concerns relating to bullying, harassment, or any other behaviour considered to be contrary to this policy may be raised either informally or formally.
- Any employee who wishes to make a complaint of harassment or bullying is encouraged first to discuss the issue informally with management, provided they feel able to do so.
  - The Office Manager is a particular point of contact for any employee discomforts, whether relating to bullying, harassment, or other workplace or personal issues, and is available for confidential discussions on any matter.
- The company and management have a positive responsibility to take seriously any such complaint, and to apply all reasonable effort into any required investigation and resolution.
- Should the issues not be resolved at the informal stage, or the employee feels unable to raise the issue informally, then a formal resolution should be sought. Formal grievances may be lodged according to the company's Grievance Procedure; they will then be dealt with in accordance to that procedure.
- Instances of bullying and harassment will be dealt with as misconduct under the company's Disciplinary Procedure, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious instances of harassment or bullying could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

## Recruitment

The company recognises that recruitment is an area in which particular care is needed to ensure fairness and accessibility for all.

In accordance with this, the company commits to ensure that any advertising, application, shortlisting, trial tasks and tests, interview and final selection procedures used do not exclude, discriminate against, or discourage any particular group. Selection of candidates every stage of the recruitment process should be on the basis of the candidate's suitability for the stated requirements of the position.

- We will ensure that job descriptions and person specifications used in advertising for positions are not discriminatory on the grounds quoted in the Policy Purpose above.
  - Person specifications should where possible focus on necessary skills, knowledge, or experience of specific tasks required, rather than formal qualifications or length of experience.
- For any publicly advertised position, a range of advertising methods will be used in order to attract the widest pool of appropriate applicants, without excluding particular groups in a manner that would constitute unacceptable discrimination.
- All advertisements shall include a statement of the company's commitment to equality and diversity. They shall also offer a clear point of contact for requesting adjustments

to the application process, and make clear that any reasonable requests on the grounds of making the process more suited to the applicant's needs will be accommodated.

- Candidates invited to interview, in person or at a distance, should be informed of the application procedure in advance, and offered the chance to request any adjustments of the process that might make it more suited to their needs.
- Where possible, standardised procedures should be used in interviewing and testing candidates in order to avoid bias in the recruitment process:
  - Any trial tasks asked of candidates should, where feasible, be scored blindly, with the scorer not having information of the candidate's identity.
  - All interviews should be conducted by at least two people.
  - The same core interview questions should be prepared in advance and asked of all candidates applying for same the job. Although candidate-specific questions may be asked, interviewers will ensure that they do not compromise the principles of this policy.
  - Notes should be made immediately after (or during) interviews, and reviewed during the selection process in order to avoid bias based on the order of interviews. These notes and candidates generally should be scored numerically against the posted job requirements as part of the decision process, and where possible, notes should be reviewed by an additional person not present in the interview.

## This policy

- This policy will be made available to employees at all times.
- Employees will be notified directly of any substantial changes to this policy within 10 working days of the changes being made.
- It is, however, employees' responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not act contrary to this policy, including by checking for any relevant changes that they might have missed.
- Any enquiries relating to this policy or to equality and diversity more generally should be addressed to the Office Manager.