

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

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Policy statement

Unique School Solutions Ltd (USS) provides fair access to its recruitment services and treats applicants and agency workers with dignity. We assess people against the requirements of each education role, make reasonable adjustments, and act on concerns about discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Safeguarding and lawful role requirements remain central to every placement decision.

1 Purpose and scope

This policy applies to USS directors, employees, consultants, applicants and agency workers. It covers our recruitment services, registration, selection and support during assignments in schools and other education settings. It also covers recruitment to our internal team and employees' terms of employment, pay and benefits, promotion, training, grievance and disciplinary matters, redundancy and dismissal. Everyone is expected to treat others respectfully and report concerns. It should be read alongside the Recruitment, Selection and Vetting Policy, Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy, complaints arrangements, employee grievance and disciplinary procedures and privacy information.

2 Equal treatment and fair recruitment

We do not unlawfully discriminate because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We do not disadvantage a person because of trade union membership or non-membership.

We advertise roles accurately and use requirements that are relevant to the work. We assess experience, qualifications, skills, suitability and safeguarding evidence consistently; record material selection decisions; and avoid assumptions about a candidate based on personal characteristics. We will not accept a client instruction that would result in unlawful discrimination. Before USS proceeds with a proposed occupational requirement or other legal exception, the client must provide written

confirmation explaining the requirement and its justification. A director must assess and approve it, recording the reasons before it is applied.

Direct discrimination means treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. It can also arise because of a perceived characteristic or association with another person, where the relevant protection applies. Indirect discrimination can arise when a provision, criterion or practice disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic and cannot be objectively justified. Consultants must consider both when setting requirements or responding to client requests.

The application form requests a date of birth for identity and safeguarding checks and makes preferred pronouns optional. Neither is used as a reason to reject a candidate. If USS introduces voluntary equality monitoring, the responses will be kept separate from selection decisions and handled under our privacy arrangements.

We apply the same fair, role-related approach to people seeking part-time work. Working fewer hours will not in itself disadvantage a candidate for a role that can be performed part time. Part-time employees and workers will not be treated less favourably than comparable full-time colleagues because they work part time, unless objectively justified. This includes pay rates, benefits, holiday and relevant leave, pension access, training, promotion and redundancy selection. Pro-rata treatment will apply where appropriate, taking account of employment status, statutory entitlements and the applicable terms.

We support employees and agency workers who propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment. We will discuss practical support and any adjustments confidentially with the person, agree appropriate arrangements and protect against discrimination or harassment. Any information shared with a school or colleague will be limited to what is necessary and handled with appropriate regard to confidentiality. Concerns can be raised through section 5 of this policy or, for internal employees, the employee grievance procedure.

A criminal record disclosure does not automatically prevent registration. For roles eligible for a DBS check, we consider only information that we are legally entitled to receive and assess it fairly under our Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy and the DBS Code of Practice.

3 Disability and reasonable adjustments

Our application form asks whether a candidate needs reasonable adjustments for application, registration or interview. We also invite applicants and agency workers to tell us about adjustments needed for an assessment or assignment. We consider requests individually, in discussion with the person concerned. Examples include an accessible interview format or venue, additional time, an interpreter, adapted documents or practical arrangements with the school. We share relevant information with a client only where needed to arrange support and with appropriate regard to confidentiality.

Health and disability enquiries will be limited to what is lawful at the relevant stage of recruitment. Before an offer of work, or inclusion in a pool of candidates from which work may be offered, we will ask only questions permitted by the Equality Act 2010, including those necessary to arrange adjustments to the recruitment process or establish whether a candidate can perform a function intrinsic to a particular role, taking account of reasonable adjustments. Any subsequent fitness enquiries will be relevant to the role, handled confidentially and considered fairly. We will not seek unrelated diagnoses or reject a candidate because of disability.

4 Harassment and victimisation

We do not tolerate harassment, including sexual harassment, or victimisation. Unwanted conduct may be in person, by phone, in writing or online. It can involve a colleague, client, school employee, pupil, parent, contractor or another person encountered through work. Examples include offensive remarks or images, unwanted sexual comments or contact, intimidation, and treating someone badly for raising or supporting a complaint.

We take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, including considering risks in assignments, giving relevant guidance, responding to reports and working with schools where needed. We will review risks and preventive action as legal duties and circumstances change. No person should suffer a detriment for raising a concern in good faith, supporting another person or participating in an investigation.

5 Raising and responding to concerns

An applicant or agency worker can raise a concern verbally or in writing with their consultant or a director, or email info@uniqueschoolsolutions.co.uk. If the usual contact is involved or uncomfortable to approach, contact a director through the same email address and ask for the concern to be handled by someone else. There is no requirement to confront the person concerned first.

We will record and consider the concern promptly and fairly, explain the next steps, consider immediate protection and investigate proportionately. Where the incident occurs at a school, we may need to coordinate with its management or safeguarding lead. Information will be shared only as necessary. We will explain the outcome where appropriate and take action within our control, which may include addressing conduct, changing an assignment, ending a placement or referral under safeguarding procedures. We will not promise absolute confidentiality or an outcome before the facts are assessed.

Breaches by internal employees will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure and may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal where appropriate. Action relating to agency workers will reflect their terms of engagement and the circumstances, and may include ending an assignment or engagement. Decisions will follow a fair assessment of the facts.

6 Responsibilities, monitoring and review

Directors oversee this policy and review complaints, recruitment practice and any voluntary monitoring data for patterns requiring action. Consultants apply fair, job-related criteria, offer adjustments, challenge inappropriate client requests and escalate concerns. Agency workers must follow this policy and the relevant school rules, and report concerns promptly.

USS will provide equal opportunities and diversity training to all internal staff, including directors and consultants. Training will cover fair selection, discrimination, harassment and victimisation, reasonable adjustments, client instructions and reporting concerns. It will be included in induction and refreshed when relevant requirements or procedures change. Directors will retain training and briefing records and review further training needs.

We review this policy at least annually and sooner if the law, statutory guidance, REC requirements or our procedures change. Staff are briefed on updates, and applicants, employees and agency workers can request this policy and details of our complaints and monitoring arrangements from a director. Evidence of recruitment decisions, adjustments and complaints is retained in accordance with our privacy and record retention arrangements.