

## Equal and Diversity Opportunities Policy

iPET Network is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to equality of opportunity for its clients and stakeholders. In the performance of its regulated functions it undertakes to comply with all current legislation including the Equality Act. iPET Network will not discriminate based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Systems to ensure compliance are:

- Checking of all units, rules of combination and assessment materials submitted for accreditation to the relevant Regulators to ensure they are not biased or in contravention of any existing legislation
- Appointment of a named person to monitor day to day issues and to initiate specific actions to ensure compliance on a day to day basis
- The requirement of Training Providers to sign a commitment to comply with any equal opportunities legislation in force at the time
- Including equality of opportunity requirements in the training of Account Managers, Tutors and Trainers
- Site acceptable use policies that promote tolerance and equality

Systems to ensure equality for all Candidates include:

- The fundamental aim of iPET Network is to produce innovative qualifications that lower barriers to entry to formal accreditation. This means equality of opportunity is fundamental to the design specifications of any qualifications that are produced.
- Targeting Training Providers that have to comply with equal opportunities legislation and are themselves independently inspected on these issues by Ofsted under section 5 of the Education Act and their Local Authorities
- Providing both public and private means of communication so that any Candidate or Tutor acting on their behalf can contact iPET Network about any issue of concern related to Equality of Opportunity
- Providing a formal complaints procedure which can be applied to equality of opportunity issues
- By enabling iPET Network qualifications to be achieved using e-portfolios (where possible) and making learning related to technology integral to some qualifications. IT will therefore be enabled to be part of the qualifications themselves. This promotes a specific aspect of equality of opportunities in education. This is a significant contribution to bridging the development to digital delivery of qualifications in the Canine and Feline sector.
- Providing flexibility for Candidates to choose their own contexts for meeting the learning criteria is less likely to discriminate against those with a minority interest.
- We are committed to making clear to all employee's and Tutors that victimisation, discrimination and harassment are disciplinary offences, especially in relation to dealing with Candidates, and will not be tolerated.

- Issues arising at iPET Network will be dealt with under the company disciplinary procedures (Disciplinary Procedures enclosed with employee's contract);
- Should a problem be identified that is caused by the assessment methods, unit design or rules of combination, these will be modified to eradicate the problem and the Regulators will be informed. All Training Providers will be notified and given time to make any necessary adjustments to their own working methods to cope with the changes.
- Should an issue arise due to operational issues within a Training Provider, the Training Provider will be informed through its Principal Tutor and given reasonable time to comply with the relevant legislation. If the Training Provider persists in non-compliance the facility to add new Candidates to their systems will be revoked until they can provide secure evidence of compliance. The normal appeals procedures will apply. Most of the Candidates are registered from mixed groups that broadly represent the population and iPET Network qualifications are offered to entire cohorts, it is likely that it is the Training Providers themselves that will determine any variations in entry by Candidate characteristics. Furthermore, these Training Providers are themselves subject to Equal Opportunities legislation. If evidence arises that Training Provider procedures could be in breach of Equal Opportunities legislation, iPET Network will investigate and suspend the facility of the Training Provider to add new Candidates to the system until such time as equality is assured. Ultimately the Training Provider could be refused accreditation but in such a case there are likely to be wider ranging issues. iPET will cooperate with other agencies in order to ensure the best interests of existing Candidates in the Training Provider are served while at the same time ensuring that the Training Provider conforms to the relevant legislation.

Consultation takes place between External Quality Assurers, Internal Quality Assurers and Tutors as part of the quality assurance and moderation dialogue at the time awards are being made. There is checking at the annual visit with recording of any issues related to equality of opportunity in the Training Provider file. Any Tutor or Candidate is free to initiate a public debate on any issue related to equal opportunities. Tutor training includes a discussion of equal opportunities with opportunities to feedback anonymously through the evaluation form. There is a customer satisfaction form available to Training Providers.

- Availability of reasonable adjustments are communicated to all Tutors during training and can be located at [www.ipetnetwork.co.uk](http://www.ipetnetwork.co.uk)
- Queries can be made in specific timeframes e.g. last year, previous year etc to monitor trends over time. We will be automatically provided with the following statistics for Candidates registered for qualifications at any time.
  - Number of male and female Tutors
  - Number of male and female Level 3 awards
  - Number of male and female Level 4 & 5 awards
  - Approx. percentage of ethnic minorities registered
  - Approx. percentage of employment status
  - Approx. percentage of ability status
- Additional data will be available from responses to customer service questionnaires and training evaluations provided opportunities for stakeholders to express their views.
- Data will be shared with the Regulators on request.

### Further general information

- Our equality policy has the aim to create the conditions in which staff and clients are treated equitably regardless of age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, creed, disability, staff category, sexual orientation, gender, marital or parental status, political belief or social or economic class, or any other criteria that cannot be shown to be properly justifiable. The procedures to ensure that this aim is achieved starts with this clear statement.
- As an Awarding Organisation iPET Network expects all Tutors to apply the same standards in their professional activities related to assessment approved by iPET Network as are laid down in this document for iPET Network itself. All Training Providers must have an up to date Equal Opportunities Policy compatible with the Equal Opportunities Policy of iPET Network and this is specified in the Training Provider approval conditions and the dialogue in the annual Training Provider visit. The Responsible Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Equal Opportunities Policy is put into practice.
- Anyone who believes they have not been treated equitably in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Policy may make their complaint either informally or by pursuing a formal complaint in accordance with the company's Grievance Procedures.

### Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

We are committed to promoting equal opportunities for people from all backgrounds. iPET Network will not discriminate based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. iPET Network are committed to:

- Make sure that when we recruit and train staff, during promotion and selection procedures and in all other employment practices, we take account of our equal opportunities policy;
- Make sure that when we are considering disciplinary procedures and dismissal, we take account of our Equal Opportunities Policy (Grievance Procedure enclosed with employee's contract);
- We are committed to making it clear to all employees that victimisation, discrimination and harassment are disciplinary offences, especially in relation to dealing with Candidates, and will not be tolerated. Such issues will be dealt with under the company's disciplinary procedures (Disciplinary Procedures enclosed with employee's contract);
- Make sure as far as possible and within the specific skills and knowledge required to maintain high standards that our workforce reflects the ethnic and gender balance of the population in Tamworth within statistically significant measures.
- Promote equality in what we write to make sure that everyone is aware of our policy and the action we are taking.

By enclosing this document with every employee's contract of employment, the company will comply with all statutory regulations with regard to equality. In particular:

- The Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Employment Act 1989
- The Employment Act 2002 (Flexible working regulations)

- The Employment Relations Act 1999,
- The Employment Rights Act 1996,
- Employment Tribunals (Interest on Awards in Discrimination Cases),
- The Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974,
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999
- Maternity and Paternity Leave Regulations 1999
- The National Minimum Wage Act 1998
- The National Minimum Wage Regulations 1999
- The Occupational Pension Schemes (Equal Treatment) Regulations 1995
- Part-time Workers Regulations 2000
- The Pensions Act 1995
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Sex Discrimination (Questions and Replies) Order 1975
- The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992
- Statutory Maternity Pay (General) Regulations 1986
- Statutory Maternity Pay (General) (Modifications and Amendment) Regulations 2000,
- Working Time Regulations 1998,
- Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004
- and any other relevant law related to equality of opportunity.

iPET Network will require Training Providers to sign a declaration that they too are fully compliant with the relevant legislation and this provides an opportunity to open a dialogue for consulting the representatives of Candidates. This will be checked at the annual visit by the External Quality Assurer and any deficiencies recorded in the Training Provider's record. The Training Provider will be given reasonable time to rectify the deficiencies but if non-compliance persists iPET Network will revoke the ability to add new Candidates or register existing Candidates for new awards until compliance is assured. In cases where equal opportunities issues are identified at iPET Network itself, iPET Network undertakes to rectify any such issues that are reasonably within its control and scope of operation.

## **Equality of Opportunity and Certification Basic Philosophy**

The philosophy of iPET Network certification is to lower barriers to entry to certification and is therefore fundamentally linked to equality of opportunity. The units are designed to meet the RQF requirements for diversity and equality by supporting assessment methods geared to improving knowledge of technological issues. It might take some people longer than others to achieve an award, but the design of the qualification is to be flexible and not cause unnecessary constraints by imposing time limits. iPET Network aims to motivate participation among those with minimal confidence and low-level skills, building confidence through progressive success.

### **Fundamental principles**

Anyone who has the physical capability to handle animals unaided, will be eligible for certification irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, religion or other human attributes. iPET Network will allow reasonable adjustments for those who, for example, can not physically "stand and walk". Should a candidate not have the capacity to stand and walk around they will be assisted with adjustable tables / baths / ramps and specialist restraint equipment as long as its deployment is accepted good practice for the specific circumstances of the candidate. Training Providers can translate the criteria, explain them, record them as audio, or take whatever other steps are necessary to meet specific needs in accessing the criteria. What matters is whether or not the candidate matches the criteria. iPET Network has defined an output specification in terms of best practice as long as the candidate can meet the criteria for these outputs with the option for reasonable adjustments they will be certificated.

### **Tutor Training and Quality assurance**

All Tutors must be trained in fair assessment methods based on the intentions of the criteria. The External Quality Assurers will check that equality of opportunity is a reality through direct observation and the use of quality assurance techniques. iPET Network requires Training Providers to provide it with the names of any students that have requested assessment but assessment is not available to them. The Training Provider must give reasons e.g. if they believe students are impossible to assess and why they came to that judgement. iPET Network will review these cases and provide feedback to the Training Providers as to whether it agrees. If not the External Quality Assurer for the Training Provider will visit the Training Provider and evaluate the reasons for any assessment disapplication and we will work with the Training Provider to resolve the issue in the best interests of the Candidates within the requirements to match the criteria. Training Providers are required to sign a statement agreeing to these procedures and to make the best efforts to provide all students with the opportunity to be fairly assessed.

From time to time iPET Network will take statistically representative samples of the certificates awarded and check statistics on the characteristics of the students and Tutors to monitor the outcomes as far as equality of opportunity is concerned. iPET Network will take steps to address any imbalances such as in the gender of those being certificated, their ethnicity or their social circumstances in so far that this is possible by asking Training Providers to review their own policies if the Training Provider is contributing disproportionately to the imbalance. iPET Network will require the Training Providers to co-operate in supplying relevant information in confidence. The company will review its Equal Opportunities Policy annually in the light of the above Acts and input from clients, recording any issues and any actions required to resolve them.

### **Monitoring and complying with the Equal Opportunities Policy**

Monitoring will take two key forms. Any equal opportunities issue that arise on a day to day basis e.g. from an appeal or enquiry will be immediately referred to the Equal Opportunities Officer (EOO). The EOO will evaluate the evidence and initiate the action to be taken if any. The EOO will record issues related to equality of opportunity as part of an evidence base for annual review. There will be an annual review of certification

information that can be used to provide information about the proportion of candidates achieving the various certificates and particular attributes related to equality of opportunity. If other issues that might be deemed relevant to monitoring equal opportunities arise, we will collect the appropriate data. It is the policy of iPET Network to minimise the data burden on Tutors and Training Providers by requesting only such information as is needed for monitoring through valid statistical methods.

