

## Universal Owner Gender and Diversity Policy

### Policy Statement

Universal Owner (the Company) recognizes that discrimination, harassment, and victimization are unacceptable and that it is in the interest of the Company and its employees to utilize the skills of the total workforce. We aim to advance equality of opportunity and to ensure no employee or job applicant receives less favorable facilities or treatment on the grounds of the **protected characteristics**:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion or belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual orientation

Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society, and each employee will feel respected and able to give their best.

We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or victimization. To that end, the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment.

Whether part-time, full-time, or temporary, all employees will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be based on aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilized to maximize the efficiency of the organization.

Our staff will not discriminate directly or indirectly or harass customers or clients because of the nine **protected characteristics** in the provision of the company's goods and services.

This policy and the associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, full account will be taken of any guidance or Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, any Government Departments, and any other statutory bodies.

## **Our Commitment**

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff are recognized and valued.
- Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying, or harassment will be tolerated.
- Training, development, and progression opportunities are available to all staff.
- To promote equality in the workplace, which we believe is good management practice and makes for a better business.
- We will review all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.
- Breaches of our equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- This policy is fully supported by senior management.
- The policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly.

## **Responsibility of Management**

Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation and operation of the arrangements will rest with the Chief Executive / Business Owner. They will ensure that:

- All their staff are aware of the policy and the arrangements, and the reasons for the policy;
- Grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly, and as quickly as possible;
- Proper records are maintained.
- Senior management will be responsible for monitoring the operation of the policy in respect of employees and job applicants.

## **Responsibility of Staff**

The attitude of the staff is crucial to ensure fair employment practices. In particular, it is the responsibility of all staff members to:

- Comply with the policy and arrangements;
- Not discriminate in their day to day activities or induce others to do so;
- Not victimize, harass or intimidate other staff or groups who have or are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics.
- Ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- Inform their manager if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.

## Third Parties

Third-party harassment is defined as when a Universal Owner employee is harassed by a third party such as a customer or client, and the harassment is related to a **protected characteristic**. Universal Owner does not tolerate such actions against its staff, and the employee concerned should inform their manager at once if this occurs. A full investigation will be launched, and all reasonable steps will be taken to prevent reoccurrence.

## Rights of Disabled People

The Company attaches particular importance to the needs of disabled people.

Under the terms of this policy, managers are required to:

- Make reasonable adjustments to maintain the services of an employee who becomes disabled, for example, training, provision of special equipment, reduced working hours. (NB: managers are expected to seek advice and guidance from external agencies where appropriate to maintain disabled people in employment);
- Include disabled people in training/development programs;
- Give full and proper consideration to disabled people who apply for jobs, having regard to making reasonable adjustments for their particular aptitudes and abilities to allow them to be able to do the job.

## Equality Training

- A series of regular briefing sessions will be held for staff on equality issues. These will be repeated as necessary. Equality information will also be included in induction programs.
- Managers will be trained on this policy and the associated arrangements. All managers who have any involvement in the recruitment and selection process will receive training.

## Monitoring

- The Company deems it appropriate to state its intention not to discriminate and assumes that this will be translated into practice consistently across the organization as a whole. Accordingly, a monitoring system will be introduced to measure the effectiveness of the policy and arrangements.
- The System will involve routine collection and analysis of information on employees' protected characteristics and Disabilities. Assessment will be conducted to measure the extent to which recruitment, internal promotion, and access to development opportunities affect equal opportunities for all.

- We will maintain information on staff who have been involved in certain key policies: Disciplinary, Grievance, and Bullying & Harassment.
- Where appropriate **equality impact assessments** will be carried out on the results of monitoring to ascertain the effect of the Company policies and our services/products may have on those who experience them.
- The information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose.
- If monitoring shows that the Company, or areas within it, are not representative or that sections of our workforce are not progressing properly within the company, then an action plan will be developed to address these issues. This will include a review of recruitment and selection procedures, company policies and practices.

## **Grievances/Discipline**

- Employees have a right to pursue a complaint concerning discrimination or victimization via the Company Grievance or Harassment Procedures.
- Discrimination and victimization will be treated as gross misconduct, and they will be dealt with under the Company Disciplinary Procedure.

## **Related Policies and Review**

- All employment policies and arrangements have a bearing on equality of opportunity. The Company policies will be reviewed regularly and any identified discriminatory elements removed.
- The effectiveness of this policy and associated arrangements will be reviewed annually under the direct supervision of the Business Owner.