

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY FOR STUDENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

AIA is fully committed to the goal of fostering mutual respect and understanding between individuals and communities and to promoting equality of opportunity among members and students.

While studying for the AIA qualification, both at college and during exam sessions, a student should expect to be treated with respect and dignity. Bullying and/or harassment create a stressful learning environment which can have a significant negative impact on a student's self-confidence and self-esteem. It is also bad for the reputation of the AIA.

If a student feels that they have been discriminated against on the grounds of age, gender, race, gender reassignment, religion, colour, HIV status, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, social and employment status, domestic circumstances, nationality, trade union membership, ethnic or national origin, political affiliation or that they have not been treated with the appropriate dignity or respect at any point during their studies this should be reported to AIA using the appropriate process outlined in Section 5 of this policy.

All reported incidents of discrimination, perceived inequality or misconduct will be followed up by AIA and the student will be advised of the outcome.

If a student requires any further clarification on any aspect of AIA Equality and Diversity Policy for Students please contact either,

The Development Manager development@aia worldwide.com or,

The Manager, Membership Services membership@aia worldwide.com

2.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A QUALIFICATION

Before the AIA begins the process of developing a new qualification a review of all current anti-discriminatory legislation is carried out. Each qualification is developed with equality and diversity threaded through it to ensure that all students can participate.

As part of the procedure for the introduction of a new qualification AIA will carry out a survey to ensure that the qualification being considered does not have any barriers to students.

An Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form for Students is sent by the Qualifications Manager to current students together with details of the qualification to be introduced, which will also include information on the aims and learning outcomes that will be achieved on completion. Any feedback is recorded and assessed by the Qualifications Manager and a report submitted to the Academic specialist to review and either agree remedial action if appropriate, or to agree upon the documentation required in situations where it is not possible to remove identified barriers.

Further confirmation is sought from support groups to ensure that the AIA qualification does not, in the opinion of the group, provide any barriers to potential new students.

Potential barriers to learning can include:

- Candidates with learning difficulties
- Candidates with medical conditions
- Candidates with physical disabilities
- Candidates with visual impairments
- Candidates with hearing impairments

The AIA's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy sets out what adjustments can be provided for people within these categories.

It may be that within the survey there are barriers identified which cannot be amended, for example, the technical language used in the unit may be difficult for a student to understand due to the fact that English is not their first language. The AIA would make every effort to remedy this situation; however, this would be on the basis that any changes to the unit would not alter the integrity of the unit itself.

As outlined above the AIA may be able to use reasonable adjustments to mitigate the barrier for students and this can be put in place prior to the exam taking place. Please refer to AIA Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy.

2.1 ELIMINATING BARRIERS

The AIA understands that barriers to learning can be complex and differ from student to student therefore each individual barrier is considered. Where possible the AIA will try to remove the barrier(s). AIA takes into account the following points when looking at how to remove or lower barriers for learning:

- **Access** means physical access as well as access to the units;
- **Awareness** of the needs of disabled people and the barriers they may experience;
- **Acceptable** that AIA may need to do things differently for some people;
- **Appreciation** of the effects of hidden difficulties such as pain or emotional stress.

3.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY DURING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

As part of application process for students AIA provides each applicant with an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Although completion of this form is not mandatory AIA would encourage students to complete and return the form as the data provided offers a valuable insight into the AIA student population; any trends that suggest inequality in the recruitment process are considered by the Director of Development in the planning of future recruitment strategy. All information is used for statistical and monitoring purposes only and treated with the utmost confidentiality in line with the requirements of current Data Protection Legislation.

4.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE EXAMS PROCESS

4.1 PREPARATION OF EXAM PAPERS

In setting the exams AIA takes into account all current legislation concerning the provision of equal opportunities to ensure the exams do not contain any unnecessary barriers to achievement and that a fair assessment is provided to all students, including those with particular requirements.

In the preparation of exam papers all AIA examiners are required to follow guidance provided by AIA in its Cultural Guidance Document and its Equality and Diversity Policy in order to minimise any structural or formatting practice that may inadvertently create difficulties for some students and consequently create the need to implement a reasonable adjustment. Examiners' adherence to this policy is monitored by the AIA Chief Examiner.

Students may request copies of these documents by emailing the AIA Qualifications Manager at exams@aia worldwide.com

Examiners are also required to provide guidance to students on what is and what is not examinable in papers where the subject is open to frequent legislative changes such as auditing.

This information is made available in the Student Focus which is sent to students by e-mail on a quarterly basis.

4.2 STUDENT INFORMATION

Disclosure of a disability isn't mandatory but it is important. It is the disabled person's right not to be treated less favourably either directly or indirectly. AIA wants to enable everyone to work to their full potential and will endeavour to make whatever reasonable adjustments are necessary to realise this aim, including providing essential information such as guidance on entering AIA exams in an alternative format found in the Student Guide. If you would like to know more about this service please contact the Qualifications Manager at exams@aia worldwide.com

4.3 ENTERING THE EXAMS

If a student feels that they may need a reasonable adjustment to be made to facilitate their normal way of working and prevent them from being disadvantaged during the exam, they should complete and submit to AIA a Special Needs Form. These can be downloaded from the AIA website or obtained from the Qualifications Manager at exams@aia worldwide.com. If a student's request for a reasonable adjustment is approved the Qualifications Manager will then liaise with the exam venue provider to ensure that adjustments are put in place. If the request is refused the student will be advised as to why the reasonable adjustment cannot be implemented i.e. it will alter the integrity of the exam. Please note these adjustments will, as far as possible, facilitate a student's normal way of working and not give them an unfair advantage or compromise the integrity of the exam. If the Qualifications Manager rejects the request, the student will be advised of the reason for this rejection i.e. adjustment would alter the integrity of the exam itself.

4.4 RECEIVING RESULTS

The Qualifications Manager is responsible for ensuring that exam results are available from a given date, in line with the issuing of exam results procedure (Section 7.7 Exam Process, Quality Assurance and Procedures) and that students are advised of this date on the website.

Exam Result Notification Forms are despatched to all students by second class post in the United Kingdom and by air mail to all other students. Students who are following AIA's professional exams can also download their results from the AIA website using a secure personal login and password. If a student requires their results to be issued in an alternative format they should contact the Qualifications Manager at exams@aia worldwide.com who will liaise with the local AIA branch in order to accommodate the request.

4.5 APPEALS

The AIA script marking process and appeals procedure maintains the anonymity of the student at all times and therefore protects against potential discrimination on the basis of assumptions based on age, gender and cultural stereotypes.

If a student is unhappy with their exam result they may appeal to AIA within the six week period post result notification. On receipt of an appeal the AIA will send an Appeal Received Letter. Further details of how to appeal against an exam result along with all the requisite documents for a student to complete can be downloaded from the AIA website; this information is also available in alternative formats; for further information please contact the Qualifications Manager on exams@aia worldwide.com

5.0 MAKING A COMPLAINT

AIA will investigate all reported incidents of unequal or discriminatory treatment in line with current Ofqual regulatory criteria and UK legislation. Complaints will be acknowledged in writing and an investigation initiated within five working days of receipt, in line with AIA Customer Services Statement. A written report of the findings and any subsequent action taken will be provided to the complainant upon completion of the investigation.

5.1 DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT AS PART OF THE EXAMS PROCESS

Information on the AIA Complaints Procedure can be found in the Student Guide and on the AIA website. Upon completion of an exam, the Senior Invigilator will advise students that if they wish to make a complaint regarding the conducting of an exam or another similar issue they should follow the procedure stated in the Student Guide.

If a student wishes to make a complaint about an incident relating to the AIA exam process they should follow the instructions in the Exams Complaints Procedures and complete and submit the Exam Complaint Form to AIA in line with this procedure.

5.2 DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT BY ANOTHER STUDENT

Any perceived incident of discrimination, inequality or misconduct by a fellow student should be reported immediately to the study provider. If possible, the incident in question should be investigated and resolved by the management of the study provider. In most instances AIA does not need to be directly involved as the study provider will address the situation and resolve it to a student's satisfaction; however, if requested, AIA will investigate the matter further.

Any student dissatisfied with the investigation conducted by the study provider should inform the Manager, Membership Services on membership@aia worldwide.com and proceed as directed in the Student Equal Opportunities Complaints Procedure.

5.3 DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT WHILST STUDYING WITH AIA

For any perceived incident of discrimination, inequality or misconduct by a study provider a student should complete the Student Equal Opportunities Complaints Form and submit it within five working days of the incident to the Development Manager development@aia worldwide.com

5.4 APPEALS

If the complainant wishes to appeal against the recommendations made they must do so within two months of the date of the letter informing them of the Committee's conclusions.

Appeals should be forwarded to the relevant department i.e. appeals against study providers reported to the Development Department and all other complaints reported to the Membership Services Department.

AIA will confirm receipt of the appeal within four working days and will forward the appeal along with all the relevant documentation to an independent reviewer with expertise in issues of equality and diversity within one month of receipt of the appeal. The Reviewer's decision is final.

The student will be notified of the outcome by the Qualifications Manager.

The outcome is then reviewed by the Chief Examiner and reported to AIA Qualifications Committee.