



Sysco Group

Equality and Diversity Strategy

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1 Introduction

This strategy covers the provision of Sysco Business Skills Academy and Brighter Futures Merseyside which sits under the umbrella of the Sysco Group.

Sysco Group is committed to creating an inclusive learning and working environment where everyone is treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to the quality of our provision and to the success of every learner, member of staff and employer we work with.

Our approach ensures that all aspects of leadership, curriculum design, teaching, personal development and learner support actively promote inclusion, reduce barriers and celebrate difference. This commitment drives our culture and continuous improvement, rather than being a response to external compliance.

Sysco Group works with a Sub-contractor and other stakeholders, to evolve its practices and policies and to broaden its commitment to equality of opportunity.

Widening participation in learning is a key goal for the Sysco Group. We aim to achieve this by ensuring equality of opportunity, promoting the benefits of diversity through our marketing actions, materials and avoiding discrimination in all areas of our engagement with learners and employers from recruitment through to achievement.

Sysco Group are committed to ensuring that the company practice in engagement with industry and responding to industry needs includes equality of opportunity in training and learning for all employers and learners.

Sysco Group's Senior management team are dedicated to Equality and Diversity and are responsible for reviewing and updating this strategy as well as accompanying policies, procedures and setting annual targets.

This strategy sets out the company's ambitions and targets in relation to promoting and advancing equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion. It also sets out Sysco Group's commitment to Widening Participation.

We have also developed this strategy to comply with the Equality Act 2010, and to demonstrate our commitment to equality of opportunity, respect, fairness and inclusion; which are integral to our culture and values.

2 Policies

The Sysco group is committed to promoting equality, diversity and an inclusive and supporting environment for staff, Learners and Employers.

Sysco Group have a number of policies in place, specific to Equality of Opportunity which run in conjunction with our Safeguarding policies and ensure that organisations undertaking training hold an appropriate policy. We have two Equal Opportunities Policies in place, one for staff and a Pride and Dignity Policy for learners. Both Policies express Sysco Group's commitment to meeting its obligations under The Equality Act 2010 which includes the nine main pieces of legislation combined.

- Equal Pay Act 1970 (Equal Value Amendment 1984)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999)
- The Race Relations Act 1976 (amendment) Regulations 2003
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (amendment) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

3 Widening Participation & Engagement

Increasing participation and engagement may not occur organically, instead a clear focus on promoting widening participation, social inclusion and diversity is required. Sysco Group will ensure that within the delivery of our learning programmes, diversity and equality of opportunity is increased and underpins the delivery of our contracts.

It is our intention to ensure that our learning programmes are open to all sections of the local community, that the profile of our learners reflects the cultural diversity and demographic profile of the local population and barriers to participation, retention and achievement are systematically removed and addressed. Sysco Group encourage, through positive action, initiatives that will promote the full engagement of under-represented groups. Sysco Group are committed to developing the capacity and capability of our staff to work in a way that actively promotes social inclusion and widening of participation via two way commitment and communication.

Sysco Group has worked hard to build an effective employer base and is committed to developing the skill base of our workforce, which will have a positive impact on participation.

We will use Equality & Diversity Focus Group Members to disseminate best practice to our programmes. Students are asked through surveys to provide feedback on equality.

4 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of everyone working with or on behalf of The Sysco Group to be fully aware of the relevant Strategy and policies and to work diligently in and maintaining, the highest level of commitment to equality and diversity at all times.

Leadership at every level promotes equality, diversity and inclusion as a core organisational value. Progress is reviewed through performance data, learner voice and staff feedback. Strategic decisions — from resource planning to subcontractor management — consider equality impacts to ensure fair access, participation and achievement for all groups.

All members of staff and learners are expected to own and act upon the principals of this strategy. A number of individuals and groups have additional responsibilities these are;

4.1 Management:

It is the responsibility of the management team to ensure that Equality and Diversity are embedded within the delivery of all programmes by or on behalf of Sysco Group. The monitoring of performance and development of action plans for improvement are implicit aspects of the management role. This will include monitoring of equality and diversity where employers are engaged in bespoke training programmes, to meet individual employer needs, ensuring equal opportunity to training programmes within Study Programme and Adult Learning for all individual learners engaged through this strand of Sysco Group's provision. Managers will assess programmes on offer regularly with the view that Sysco will continue to increase opportunities to participate in learning.

4.2 Staff/Associates:

The staff responsibilities are focussed on ensuring a commitment to Sysco Group's Equality and Diversity Policies. To further enhance the profile of Equality and Diversity as critical agendas for a better awareness, through their own training and development and their efforts to uphold the principles of the Pride and Dignity Policy.

4.3 The Board and Focus Group:

The team has overall responsibility for monitoring the strategy implementation and development and the ongoing progress of the annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan. They meet quarterly specifically to review data and use the findings to monitor targets and agree actions to address areas of concern.

4.4 Hot Topics:

Hot topics are produced by the company monthly to raise awareness of Equality & Diversity issues which are current and raise awareness of key areas. They are to be shared with all staff. Tutors and Managers have the responsibility of ensuring that Hot Topics are discussed with learners, employers and sub-contractors.

4.5 Sub-contractors:

Relationships are formed with sub-contractors to compliment Sysco Group's own delivery, through offering programmes of learning in a variety of qualification areas that will increase opportunities to learners. Sub-contractors are monitored to ensure Equality and Diversity policies are effectively implemented.

Sysco Group will ensure that equality and diversity is embedded into all our systems and delivery functions including;

- Teaching, Learning & Assessment

- Staff Development
- Policy and Practice
- Learner Support

5 Strategy Objectives

Sysco Group will continue to develop and monitor 6 key objectives for 2025/26, these will be monitored as part of the Focus Team meetings. The objectives are as follows;

Objective 1

Continue to evaluate the engagement of representative and consider pro-active recruitment.

Objective 2

All staff to continue to be aware of their own and the company responsibilities for advancing a culture of Equality and Diversity and fostering good relations, achieved through targeted training and development activities.

Objective 3

To ensure Equality and Diversity is reflected in our teaching, learning and assessment, leading to a good experience throughout the learner journey.

Objective 4

Continue to Widen Participation within learning and remove barriers where possible.

Objective 5

Continue to use and monitor data of staff and learners to build a greater awareness and understanding of diversity and use findings to improve our policies and practices.

Objective 6

Ensure staff and learners are aware of the effects of their behaviour on others and are equipped to challenge and report inappropriate behaviour.

6 Sources of information

To guide its Equality and Diversity Policy and Strategy development, Sysco Group regularly seeks information in the form of statistical data, feedback from the learner and employers, environment and topical issues from the popular press.

Sysco Group sets benchmarks to monitor performance against the EO agenda and monitor data from the Data Service Portal as well as census and statistical bulletin data.

7 Delivery of training and learning activities

Sysco Group is committed to offering high quality programme of learning to suit individual needs through the delivery of robust bespoke training solutions packages for individuals and employers.

Inclusion is embedded through curriculum intent, implementation and impact. Learning materials and teaching approaches are designed to reflect diverse experiences, challenge stereotypes and promote mutual respect.

Staff receive regular professional development to build confidence in inclusive pedagogy, differentiated teaching, accessible assessment, and culturally responsive practice.

Sysco Group identify specific individual needs and requirements based on initial assessment results which includes; learning styles and an organisational needs analysis. We will not promise to deliver any programme unless we are confident we can do so with the level of quality and support the learner/employer has the right to expect.

We support and provide training to our learner/client-facing staff to assess learner/client needs before they begin learning to ensure that all requirements are accounted for. We aim to make sure that, wherever necessary, additional support is provided and that no learner/client is de-motivated by embarking on an unsuitable programme. We make special arrangements to support learner's needs; for example using technology, providing readers, scribes or extra time during testing. Lesson plans will reflect learning.

To further support the planning and delivery of learning, Sysco Group have embedded an enhanced Skills Forward system. The system provides detailed initial assessment & diagnostic results for all learners, which are used to plan an effective learning agreement and support plan. The system also holds a plethora of learning resources for both English, Maths and digital skills that are available at different levels. These resources can be accessed 24 hours a day and are available in either paper-based or electronic format. Additionally Sysco Group have a dedicated SEND team & SENCO who provide specialist bespoke screening to support learning and remove barriers.

Training and learning activities are systematically monitored and reviewed with the staff through the Internal Verification and Staff Observation cycles, to ensure that there is a consistent message supportive of the principles of equality of opportunity as set out in the company policies.

Subcontractor delivery is regularly monitored to ensure quality delivery through a variety of methods. This includes checking Equality and Diversity data, policies, audits and staff observations.

Sysco Group focus on providing employers with bespoke training solutions to meet their individual requirements.

8 Learning Materials

Sysco Group develops and reviews learning materials on a continuous basis and endeavours to ensure that the content of all learning materials are consistent with the principles of the EO

Policies and that no images, words, terminology or any other offensive inferences appear in the content of designed or selected materials used to support learning.

Furthermore, Sysco Group seeks to source or develop materials which promote equality and diversity both in style and content from a range of sources including specialist agencies, partner organisations, and the internet.

All staff and Learners are tasked with completing the ACAS Equality & Diversity short course (as part of our Enrichment Unit) which empowers them with further knowledge and understanding.

8.1 Training Materials:

Sysco Group utilise learning materials which are appropriate to individual learning needs and review these on a regular basis.

The Skills Forward System, which identifies training needs, enables the learner to view activities in different formats, for example; sound is available along with changeable background colours that can assist with visual difficulties and/or learning needs. The learning system offered to all learners enables flexible and diverse learning resources that can remove barriers in terms of geographical location and time.

Sysco Group continue to use the “hot topics” system to continually raise awareness of equality and diversity. This system is promoted to staff, learners and employers Monthly, using current scenarios in the press to maintain relevancy and build confidence and knowledge.

Managers create and review materials to suit programme changes. These will be continue to be monitored during 2025-26 and further developed where necessary.

The delivery team liaise closely with employers to design bespoke training resources and packages and to up-skill learners allowing them to progress on to an Apprenticeship programme.

Equality and Diversity resources will continue to be reviewed annually.

8.2 Off site testing:

Sysco Group will continue to offer off site testing to all relevant learners and students. This option reduces barriers to learners wishing to take part in training.

9. Access to learning and employment

Sysco Group offers a broad range of publicly funded education and training programs to cater for a variety of ages. Due to Government focus Sysco Group have worked hard in promoting Study Programme Students and adult programmes. During 2025/26 Sysco Group will continue to focus on Study Programme and adult programmes to increase the skills levels.

Sysco Group monitor their provision to ensure that where required, E&D is fully covered with employers.

9.1 Study Programme (16 – 19):

Study Programme (SP) has been in operation since August 2013, replacing Foundation Learning. The Study Programme is funded by the ESFA. Brighter Futures part of the Sysco group is a lead provider, working with a sub-contractor. The role of the local authority is key, in that the curriculum offered must meet with local needs. Subcontracted deliverers will be reviewed ongoing throughout the year and measured in the key areas of Retention, Achievement and Progression. Progressions are measured by learners who are successful in securing Employment or Further Education.

The Sysco Group have developed the curriculum to meet the needs of the Study Programme, this will include the development of resources for functional skills Math's and English specifically to further enhance GCSE. Sysco Group will continue to increase placement opportunities and implement vocational routes of training.

The Sysco Group have reviewed and further improved the learner 'Honour Award' to further educate and support our learners within a wide range of key topics including Equality & Diversity, Safeguarding, British Values, Prevent, Health & Wellbeing.

In this current contract year, Sysco Group will work with a high number of SP learners.

9.2 Adult Learning:

During 2025/26 Sysco Group will continue to develop the programme to deliver to adult learners. This programme is to ensure adults have the skills required to look for and gain employment and to progress within their career development and personal aspirations. During 2025/26 Sysco Group will continue to develop this programme, by offering opportunities to adults. Sysco Group will continue to provide aftercare IAG and support.

Sysco Group is committed to widening participation and will support recruitment from disadvantaged or deprived backgrounds.

Sysco Group works closely with job centre and its own employer client network to identify suitable opportunities for unemployed learners.

Learners will be provided advice and support with the view of encouraging them to progress into employment and further training.

9.3 Higher Education:

Sysco will continue to grow our Higher Education programme during 2025/26, with the intention to further expand provision in the following years both through HNC/HND delivery and Degrees validated by partner Universities.

Our focus will be on increasing access for students from non-White British communities and improving the continuation rates for students who are First in Family. Our Participation and Access Plan focuses on five intervention strategies that seeks to address two areas of

access and continuation. This will require support from across the whole organisation and will be managed by the Equality & Diversity Focus Group and the Head of Higher Education.

9.4 Progressions:

During 2025/26 progression opportunities for learners are discussed as part of the review process. The Tutor monitors the learner's journey, providing information, advice and guidance to support continued learning. The Training Manager monitors learner progression as part of the 121 process. Sysco Group support individual learner progression through the wider range of programmes that we offer. Where Sysco Group is not able to offer the desired progression route information, advice and guidance will be offered as part of the moving on process. It is the intention of Sysco Group to ensure as many learners as possible continue with their learning. Sysco Group Move on and Aftercare process monitors the impact of the programme through collecting data on soft progressions. These include increased responsibilities/salaries, enhanced confidence and improved English, maths and Digital Skills. Sysco Group will continue to monitor the data of soft progressions to assess the impact of the programme and make improvements.

9.5 Performance/monitoring:

Sysco Group reviews data on a monthly basis, however, the Equality & Diversity Focus Group meetings are held every term, with the sole purpose of reviewing performance/trends/targets etc.

The data Sysco Group monitors includes contract performance, success rates, recruitment, in learning, age, areas/region, programme, progressions, gender, ethnicity and disability. Where possible, Sysco Group also monitor and review performance against regional and national performance.

Target data is reviewed on a termly basis during the management meetings and actions are put in place to address any shortfalls.

Sysco Group also monitor the geographical area of recruitment against the size and type of employers.

10. Sub-contractors

Sysco Group is in partnership with one organisation in the delivery of the Study Programme.

Sub-contractors are required to complete a PQQ on an annual basis. The PQQ is a provider questionnaire that is validated by a member of Sysco Group staff. The validation includes a thorough review of systems and policies which includes equality of opportunity, safeguarding and monitoring of data.

All sub-contractors are required to submit a self-Assessment report. Sub-contractors whom are not required to complete a Self-Assessment Report for the ESFA are required to complete a mini self-assessment report, which includes leadership and management, learner's outcomes and teaching and learning. Sysco Group's quality team will monitor the outcome of this report. Sysco

Group observe teaching and learning at all sub-contractors, Equality and Diversity forms part of the observation process. PQQ monitoring includes Equality and Diversity and Safeguarding policies.

11. Complaints learners/staff

The continuous improvement of Sysco Group's delivery against the equality and diversity agenda is driven from a number of sources including the monitoring of complaints, grievances, appeals and learner/client/staff feedback. Sysco Group has separate policies in place specific to staff and separately for learners/clients.

11.1 Staff:

Staff rights of Equality of Opportunity and related legislation are covered by Sysco Group policies and procedures which are issued to all staff and are saved on the company intranet site.

Examples are as follows:

- Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy
- Well Being Policy
- Paternity Policy
- Maternity Policy
- Adoption Policy
- Parental Leave Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Disability Policy
- Harassment Policy and Procedure
- Grievance Procedure

11.2 Learners/Students:

Learners on all programmes are assured of their rights under the Equal Opportunities agenda by a combination of the grievance and appeals procedures, an effective internal verification/moderation process and the operation of a Learner Evaluation and Suggestions system. Learners on all programmes are asked to complete individual evaluation Forms throughout the year. Equality and Diversity must be considered within every training programme; specifically through the honour award on Study Programme through dedicated Enrichment Workbooks in Apprenticeships and Adult programmes. The Review process is used to assess learners understanding of Equality & Diversity and raise awareness to enhance knowledge.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

Equality and diversity data will be reviewed regularly by senior leaders and programme managers to inform planning, resource allocation and quality improvement.

We analyse outcomes and learner feedback by characteristic (including age, gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic background) to identify disparities and measure the effectiveness of interventions.

Findings inform the annual Equality Action Plan, Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan, ensuring that inclusion remains integral to decision-making, not a separate activity.

13. Targets

The structure of our targets allows local needs to be met whilst also setting a clear direction for the company. Yearly targets are set and statistical data is used to compare progress against delivery/targets. Where we are on target or ahead of target, we will discuss and revise any actions as part of a number of the company communication strategy, these meetings include;

- The management team meeting.
- The Equality and Diversity Focus team meetings.

Yearly targets are set and these will be maintained through the circulation of management information reports for discussion.

The company determines targets by using information from a variety of sources including the Office of National Statistics (NOMIS), Labour Force Survey and information provided by the Department for Education and Office for Students.

The Sysco Group produces a EDIMs on an annual basis for monitoring by the Management team.

14. Summary Statement

Equality, diversity and inclusion are not compliance activities or inspection criteria: they are essential to our mission, values and success as a provider. Our goal is to create a culture where difference is respected, opportunity is open to all, and every learner and member of staff can realise their potential.