

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. Policy statement

Westcon-Comstor (referred to as 'the company') is an equal opportunity employer and is fully committed to a policy of treating all of its employees and job applicants equally. The Company will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment and selection, promotion, transfer, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, other terms of employment, discipline, selection for redundancy and dismissal.

The Company will take all reasonable steps to employ, train and promote employees on the basis of their experience, abilities and qualifications without regard to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. In this policy, these are known as the "protected characteristics".

Employees have a duty to co-operate with the Company to make sure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination. Action will be taken under the Company's disciplinary procedure against any employee who is found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful discrimination. Serious breaches of this equal opportunities policy statement will be treated as potential gross misconduct and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal. Employees should bear in mind that they can be held personally liable for any act of unlawful discrimination.

You should draw the attention of your line manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices. You must not victimise or retaliate against an employee who has made allegations or complaints of discrimination or who has provided information about such discrimination. Such behaviour will be treated as potential gross misconduct in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure. You should support colleagues who suffer such treatment and are making a complaint.

The Company has a separate dignity at work policy which deals with harassment, bullying and intimidation and sets out how complaints of that type will be dealt with.

2. Process

2.1 Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when, because of one of the protected characteristics, a job applicant or an employee is treated less favourably than other job applicants or employees are treated or would be treated.

The treatment will still amount to direct discrimination even if it is based on the

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protected characteristic of a third party with whom the job applicant or employee is associated and not on the job applicant's or employee's own protected characteristic. In addition, it can include cases where it is perceived that a job applicant or an employee has a particular protected characteristic when in fact they do not.

The Company will take all reasonable steps to eliminate direct discrimination in all aspects of employment.

2.2 Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination is treatment that may be equal in the sense that it applies to all job applicants or employees but which is discriminatory in its effect on, for example, one particular sex or racial group.

Indirect discrimination occurs when there is applied to the job applicant or employee a provision, criterion or practice (PCP) which is discriminatory in relation to a protected characteristic of the job applicant's or employee's. A PCP is discriminatory in relation to a protected characteristic of the job applicant's or employee's if:

- it is applied, or would be applied, to persons with whom the job applicant or employee does not share the protected characteristic
- the PCP puts, or would put, persons with whom the job applicant or employee shares the protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared with persons with whom the job applicant or employee does not share it
- it puts, or would put, the job applicant or employee at that disadvantage, and
- it cannot be shown by the Company to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The Company will take all reasonable steps to eliminate indirect discrimination in all aspects of employment.

2.3 Recruitment, advertising and selection

The recruitment process will be conducted in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job in terms of relevant experience, abilities and qualifications. The Company is committed to applying its equal opportunities policy statement at all stages of recruitment and selection.

Advertisements will aim to positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, the Company will, as far as reasonably practicable:

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1. Ensure advertisements are not confined to those areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants with a particular protected characteristic.
2. Avoid setting any unnecessary provisions or criteria which would exclude a higher proportion of applicants with a particular protected characteristic.

Where vacancies may be filled by promotion or transfer, they will be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees with a particular protected characteristic.

However, where, having regard to the nature and context of the work, having a particular protected characteristic is an occupational requirement and that occupational requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, the Company will apply that requirement to the job role and this may therefore be specified in the advertisement.

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. All applications will be processed in the same way. The staff responsible for short-listing, interviewing and selecting candidates will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for their consistent application. Person specifications and job descriptions will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Wherever possible, all applicants will be interviewed by at least two interviewers and all questions asked of the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job. The selection of new staff will be based on the job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question.

With disabled job applicants, the Company will have regard to its duty to make reasonable adjustments to work provisions, criteria and practices or to physical features of work premises or to provide auxiliary aids or services in order to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

If it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect the performance of the job (for example, if the job involves unsociable hours or extensive travel), this will be discussed objectively, without detailed questions based on assumptions about any of the protected characteristics.

2.4 Training and promotion

The Company will train all line managers in the Company's policy on equal opportunities and in helping them identify and deal effectively with discriminatory acts or practices. Line managers will be responsible for ensuring they actively promote equality of opportunity within the departments for which they are responsible.

The Company will also provide training to all employees to help them understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities and what they can do

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to create a work environment that is free from discrimination.

Where a promotional system is in operation, it will not be discriminatory and it will be checked from time to time to assess how it is working in practice. When a group of workers who predominantly have a particular protected characteristic appear to be excluded from access to promotion, transfer and training and to other benefits, the promotional system will be reviewed to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination.

2.5 Terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services

All terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful direct or indirect discrimination because of one or more of the protected characteristics.

2.6 Equal pay and equality of terms

The Company is committed to equal pay and equality of terms in employment. It believes its male and female employees should receive equal pay where they are carrying out like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. In order to achieve this, the Company will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

2.7 Reporting complaints

All allegations of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The Company will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints of unlawful discrimination from employees.

If you wish to make a complaint of discrimination, you should do so promptly and use the Company's grievance procedure.

If your complaint relates to bullying, harassment or intimidation, you should refer to the Company's dignity at work policy statement.

3. Monitoring & Compliance

The Company will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions and personnel and pay practices and procedures in order to assess whether equal opportunity is being achieved. This will also involve considering any possible indirectly discriminatory effects of its working practices. If changes are required, the Company will implement them. The Company will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome substantial disadvantages caused by disability.

4. Awareness Training & Implementation

The Company shall ensure that appropriate advice and training is made available through the HR team. All new employees will be made aware of this policy as part of their wider induction into the organisation.

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5. References

ACAS Guidance on Equal Opportunities. Available at www.acas.org.uk

Data Protection Act 1998 - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980029.htm>