

**HEAD OFFICE:**

Sigmer Technologies  
The Sussex Innovation Centre  
University of Sussex  
Falmer, Brighton  
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## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

This Equal Opportunities Policy Statement and Policy Statement on Harassment at Work are designed to implement the commitment of the Employer to Equal Opportunities. It is the responsibility of every employee to ensure his or her own conduct conforms to the expected standards and reflects these Policy Statements.

The aim of the policies is to encourage harmony and respect amongst individuals so as to promote good working practices with a view to maximising the performance and the return to the Employer and the employees.

If Equal Opportunities are not applied then valuable talent and potential are wasted. Moreover when unfair discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation take place they bring about a climate of fear, insecurity and poor work performance. As well as being unlawful it affects profitability and morale. It is therefore vital that every employee understands his or her responsibilities. Equal Opportunities are taken very seriously by the Employer and wilful failure to apply the policies or evidence of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation will result in disciplinary action which may include your dismissal.

### The Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

1. The Employer seeks to employ a workforce which reflects the diverse community at large because the Employer values the individual contribution of people irrespective of sex, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin.
2. All employees will be treated with dignity and respect. The Employer will use its best endeavours to provide a working environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the grounds of sex, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin.
3. The Employer recognises its legal obligations including those under the Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act, The Equal Pay Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Part-time Workers legislation.
4. The Employer undertakes to review periodically its selection criteria and procedures to maintain a system where individuals are selected, promoted and treated solely on the basis of their merits and abilities.
5. The Employer will not tolerate acts which breach this policy and all instances of such behaviour or alleged behaviour will be taken seriously, fully investigated and may be subject to the disciplinary procedures of the Employer. The Employer further seeks to give all employees equal opportunity and encouragement to progress within the organisation by implementing a positive action plan.
6. If an existing employee becomes disabled the Employer will make every effort to retain him or her within the workforce whenever reasonable and practicable.

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7. Whenever reasonably practicable to do so the Employer will install in existing premises facilities for people with disabilities. Whenever the Employer invests capital in new or refurbished premises every practicable effort will be made to provide for the needs of staff and customers with disabilities.
8. The Employer undertakes to distribute and publicise this policy statement to all employees and elsewhere as from time to time appropriate.
9. Any employee who believes that they may have been subjected to treatment which breaches this policy may raise the matter through the grievance procedure of the Employer.

## Policy statement on harassment at work

1. The Employer believes that the dignity of every person must be respected. Harassment of colleagues or visitors is unacceptable and will be regarded as gross misconduct. The highest standards of conduct are required of everyone regardless of seniority.
2. The Employer recognises that harassment may take many forms. It may be directed towards persons of either sex. It may relate to a person's ethnic origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental attributes or some other personal characteristic.
3. Harassment may involve action or inaction, behaviour, exclusion, comment or physical contact that the recipient finds objectionable or offensive. It may result in the recipient feeling threatened, humiliated, intimidated, patronised, demoralised or less confident in their ability. Condoning such conduct may be harassment in itself. The test of harassment is, at least in part, subjective.
4. Examples of unacceptable conduct include, but are not limited to:-
  - verbal abuse, or insulting behaviour
  - sexist or racist jokes, jokes about an individual's sexual orientation or jokes about an individual's physical or mental attributes
  - the display or circulation of sexually suggestive or racially abusive material
  - bullying, coercive or threatening behaviour
  - the ridicule or exclusion of an individual for cultural or religious differences, on the grounds of sex or sexual orientation or on the grounds of disability
  - unsolicited or unwelcome sexual advances, including touching, staring or commenting
  - comments of a sexual nature about a person's appearance or dress.
5. Harassment, and particularly sexual, racial or disability harassment, will be regarded as gross misconduct for disciplinary purposes. Accordingly, employees guilty of harassment run a serious risk of summary dismissal.
6. Equally, an allegation of harassment must not be made lightly. If it is found that an allegation of harassment has been made without foundation and maliciously then this will also be regarded as gross misconduct for disciplinary purposes.
7. All complaints of harassment should be made to your manager unless the complaint is regarding this person when you should complain to that person's superior.

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