



# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

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## 1. Purpose

This policy explains Jobsplus Training Centre’s position with respect to its education provision and inclusion of all learners.

## 2. Applicability

This policy applies to every person applying for and attending a Jobsplus course. The training services management team has the overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. All workers (including Training Coordinators, Training Design and Quality Assurance team, persons manning the reception and trainers) at the training services are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they follow it.

## 3. Terminology

*Direct discrimination* is “when a person is treated less favourably than another person is, has been or would be, treated in a comparable situation” as per the *European Union Act – Equal treatment of Persons Order, 2007 (Chapter 460)*.

*Indirect discrimination* is “when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put a person at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary” as per the *European Union Act – Equal treatment of Persons Order, 2007 (Chapter 460)*.

## 4. Related Legislation and local documentation

This policy document aligns with the respective Maltese legislation and local policies, namely: The Equality for Men and Women Act, 2003 (Chapter 456); Equal Opportunities Act (Persons with Disability) Act, 2000 (Chapter 413); Employment and Training Services Act, 2019 (Chapter 594); European Union Act – Equal treatment of Persons Order, 2007 (Chapter 460); A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools - Route to Quality Inclusion; Language education policy profile; A national inclusive educational framework; Trans gender variant and intersex students in schools’ policy; Equal Treatment of Persons Order In Relation To Race/Ethnic Origin (LN 2017); Access to Goods and Services and their Supply (Equal Treatment) Regulations (LN 2008) and Malta Further and Higher Education Authority referencing report (2016)



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## 5. Policy

It is Jobsplus' responsibility to provide training courses to assist persons in their upskilling and reskilling to find employment. Jobsplus obtains information from employers regarding the number, educational level, skills and aptitudes of persons they may require for employment both in the short term and in the long term.

Inclusive education is recognized as a basic human right. Jobsplus is committed to ensuring a safe, accessible learning environment for all students coming from diverse and unique backgrounds. It is Jobsplus' policy not to discriminate against students based on gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, race, religion or belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, pregnancy or any other minority group as per legislative requirements as well as to promote best practice. Jobsplus aims to offer equal opportunities to all students through a learner-centred approach to achieving their full potential.

### 5.1 Admission

To enhance accessibility, different routes for course enrolment are available. Registration for a course can be done through the Employment advisor, at the Jobsplus' Training Complex, online, via e-mail or by telephone. The process of student admission to a Jobsplus course is based on the student's academic achievements and relevant work experience. There are instances where persons who do not meet the entry requirements are invited to sit for a pre-course assessment. All information about course admission is publicly available in a transparent manner on the Jobsplus website. Courses are offered free of charge and all year round to everyone residing legally in Malta within the working age population. At the registration stage, students are asked to provide information about any specific learning needs or disabilities to provide them with the necessary support which would enable them to make the most out of their training.

Recruitment of teaching staff is based on personal merit (experience and qualifications) and interview performance, with no bias at all stages of the recruitment process. Teaching staff are provided with induction training on the procedures of training at Jobsplus, schemes available and their responsibilities. All teaching staff are presented with a contract together with the i) Equality and Diversity policy and the ii) Continuing Professional Development Policy.



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## **5.2 Training Material**

All training material is reviewed by the Training Design and Quality Assurance (TDQA) unit to ensure that it is written in plain and clear Maltese and/or English language understood by the entire class, does not include stereotypes, does not propagate discrimination and reflects Jobsplus growing non-Maltese students. The course notes are provided to students in soft or hard copy at no cost. Training material is updated as necessary based on the tutor's experience and students' feedback to respond effectively to all student's needs. This will ensure a flexible learning environment that responds to how the student learns and accommodate students within an inclusive learning environment through Universal Design for Learning principles. Universal Design for Learning is crucial to ensure a flexible and accessible learning environment because students have different needs, personalities and learning preferences.

## **5.3 Student support**

Students are provided with all the support possible from the Jobsplus staff to facilitate their learning experience. Apart from assisting students to reach the learning outcomes of the course through meaningful, high-quality education, Jobsplus follows a holistic educational approach to help students obtain certain soft skills which will help them succeed at work and in society.

The support available to students before attending a course varies according to the circumstances. Jobsplus strives to develop a conducive learning environment for all learners to ensure that their learning needs are accommodated. Jobsplus offers free transport from Floriana to Hal Far and from Hal Far to Floriana both before and after the course. Employment Advisors hold one-to-one meetings with prospective trainees to help them determine the line of work which best suits their needs and help them decide which course they need to follow to obtain the required skills that will help them find employment. The Training Coordinators provide all the information required and answer any students' queries. The student handbook can be found on the Jobsplus website (<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=46763>). This handbook includes the rights and responsibilities of all those who are following a Jobsplus course. Jobsplus believes that every student can contribute with a mix of strengths, weaknesses, experiences and qualities within the learning environment. Jobsplus strives to nurture a collaborative culture and increase the sense of belonging by providing students with the opportunity to express themselves through open discussions and sharing of experiences in any given course. By allowing students the space and independence to express essential values of their identity respectfully, a safe and inclusive environment is created that promotes the student's success and well-being.



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For persons with physical disabilities or impairments, the Corporation's Training Complex is equipped with easy access to all rooms. Jobsplus tries to eliminate barriers within learning environments by considering alternative educational routes by being flexible and responsive to the student's educational needs. Jobsplus has its Occupational Therapists within the Inclusive Employment Services Unit who assist trainees in their learning as necessary. Jobsplus works in partnership with the Lino Spiteri Foundation which offers several services to persons with disabilities. Eligible persons include (but are not limited to); Intellectual disability, Physical Disability, Sensory Impairment and Mental Health difficulties. In addition, Jobsplus collaborates with FITA (Foundation for Information Technology and Accessibility) to support disabled individuals in overcoming barriers during training and employment through assistive technology. Furthermore, Jobsplus can refer trainees to make use of the ACTU (Access to Communication and Technology Unit) within Agenzija Sappport to assist disabled individuals with complex communication needs and those requiring alternative access to technology. Technical support is also provided to ensure that adequate resources are available at the Training Complex and during online classes.

Language teaching and learning is an essential part of social policy in Europe. Jobsplus offers Maltese and English courses at different levels. This enables students whose first language is not Maltese or English to integrate better into society by providing them with basic knowledge of these languages. Offering Maltese language courses helps students acquire a sense of Maltese identity while English courses provide students with 'near-universal' knowledge since it is an international language. Due to the growing presence of migrant students following Jobsplus courses, both teachers and pupils employ extensive English-Maltese code-switching in the classroom. Maltese culture orientation videos are also available to all European students through the following EURES link <https://www.eures.com.mt/index.php/eures-media> for free.

## **5.4 Assessments**

The assessment methodology of different courses varies depending on the MQF level and learning objectives to be achieved. Assessments can be summative or formative and can take various formats, including written, hands-on, presentations, discussions or placement. The placement module is included in some of the Jobsplus courses and offers the students with an opportunity for hands-on learning through work experience. The arrangements are fair, providing a comparable experience opportunity for each student.



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The placement equips students with both hard and soft skills. During the placement module, Jobsplus staff act as the administrator and coordinates the placement between the student and the placement provider. Jobsplus monitors the students during their placement through visits carried out and if required acts as a mediator in issues arising between the student and the placement provider. During visits, students are also monitored to assess them and ensure that both Jobsplus and the placement provider are providing adequate resources to reach the respective course learning outcomes in a safe environment. Visits during placement also aim for Jobsplus staff to keep updated with the latest developments in that particular sector and revises the courses accordingly.

The provider is expected to ensure that the student is familiar with its regulations and procedures and provide a safe learning environment in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Authority Act. The provider is also to ensure that students' well-being is safeguarded by providing an environment free from discrimination while allowing Jobsplus staff to carry out monitoring visits. On the other hand, the students are expected to follow the regulations and procedures of the provider, respect the timetable as agreed with the provider and carry out related tasks entrusted to them as part of their training.

The assessment criteria of a course are designed to be as inclusive as possible. Jobsplus explores other forms of arrangements for those persons who have a form of disability to accommodate specific learning needs, while still keeping in line with the assessment criteria. Such arrangements may include the allocation of extra time, the use of a computer for the written component, the use of assistive technology through ACTU or FITA, conducting the written assessment orally or allowing the assistance of a Learning Support Assistant (LSA). In the latter case, student is to present a report from a licensed educational psychologist and the services rendered by the LSA are paid by Jobsplus. Such a request should be made towards the beginning of the course so that it gives the TDQA unit enough time to prepare a specific assessment and/or make the necessary amendments (while maintaining the same level of difficulty of assessments) to facilitate such trainees during their assessment.

Training design is aligned with the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority standards and regulations but strives for flexible and sensitive content in relation to learning outcomes and assessment.



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## 6. Breaches of the Policy

If the student feels that the principle of equal treatment within the scope of this policy has not been applied to them and hence, they have been disadvantaged on any of the unlawful grounds outlined, the student has a right to raise the matter in writing to the respective coordinator specifying the details and attaching any relevant information or by filing a complaint online (<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/privacy-policy/complaints-procedure>). If after investigation it is proven that the student suffered committed acts of discrimination, the necessary disciplinary action will be taken. On the other hand, if false allegations of a breach of this policy are found to have been made in bad faith, the student will be subject to appropriate corrective action. Jobsplus will take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

## 7. Conclusion

Inclusive education is a continuous developmental process. When new barriers to learning are identified, Jobsplus tries to provide the appropriate support to mitigate the difficulties encountered by students, thus creating a nurturing and inclusive environment, which supports learning for all. Feedback and suggestions received from all Jobsplus stakeholders together with other data that is collected and analysed are crucial to identifying areas for improvement and enhancing Jobsplus services.