

Debate Mate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2022-23

Our Commitment

At Debate Mate, we are about tackling social mobility and injustice. To do that, it's crucial we reflect the communities we serve. Whether through our programmes, our employees, or our Board of Trustees, creating diverse teams is both a social and business imperative at Debate Mate.

Teaching young people the skills of communication and leadership required to create positive life choices is what makes our Debate Mate mentors such key influencers. Their experience and perspectives are important in raising their aspirations and increasing young people's self-esteem. We take seriously the commitment to provide our students with diverse role models who reflect the communities in which they live. Diversity of race, ethnicity and culture, gender, age, and social background is reflected in the mentors that run the sessions in their schools, the guest speakers that they see at our events, and the people that we feature on our YouTube, social media, and marketing material.

Debate Mate's equity, diversity and inclusion strategy focuses on equal treatment and equal opportunity for our staff, mentors, students, and other stakeholders. It states, 'It is not correct or fair that people are discriminated against because of who they are or what they believe. So, we need to stop that discrimination and change behaviour.'

Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out our approach to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Debate Mate and the avoidance of discrimination at work.

It applies to all aspects of the employment relationship, including recruitment, pay and conditions, training, appraisals, promotion, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment. This policy's purpose is to help us uphold standards of behaviour and to deliver on equality of opportunity and outcome, fairness and respect for everyone at Debate Mate. It applies to all prospective and current employees of Debate Mate, as well as workers, clients, contractors, suppliers and volunteers with whom we are engaged, whether on a full-time, part-time, casual, fixed-term, permanent or temporary basis.

We are committed to promoting equal opportunities in all aspects of our work and employment and promoting the diversity of our workforce. You will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, [including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin], religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equalities Act in 2010). Debate Mate is also committed to eradicating discrimination and/or harassment because of gender identity and social background.

What do Equity Diversity and Inclusion mean at Debate Mate?

Equity - refers to fairness and justice, it means recognising that we do not all start from the same place and that we must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances. The process is ongoing, requiring us to overcome and identify intentional and unintentional barriers arising from bias or systemic structures.

Diversity - is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religions or ethical values systems, national origin, and political beliefs.

Inclusion - every individual, regardless of background are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to develop key skills to succeed and fulfill their potential. Our programmes are for everyone.

Discrimination

The legal principles and protections set out in this policy reflect the minimum standards of behaviour required of everyone who engages with Debate Mate across all sectors of the organisation, regardless of location. Notwithstanding the different levels of workplace protection that may apply in the country where you work, our aim is to ensure that wherever you are based, you are treated fairly, and a consistent approach is taken to reduce your exposure to discrimination, victimisation or harassment.

You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people, including current and former employees, job applicants, volunteers, young people with whom we work, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with volunteers, suppliers or other work-related contacts), and on work-related trips or events, including social events.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because of their sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.

Perception discrimination: This is treating someone less favourably because it's perceived that they have a protected characteristic, whether they do or not. For example, treating someone less favourably because it's perceived that they're gay when they're not.

Discrimination by association: This is treating someone less favourably because they associate with an individual who has a protected characteristic. For example, treating someone less favourably because their daughter is a lesbian or because their son is trans.

Harassment: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy. For example:

- unwanted physical conduct or "horseplay", including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing;
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless);

- offensive emails, text messages or social media content; and
- mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability.

Victimisation: retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment. For example:

- An individual resigns after making a complaint of sexual harassment. They later went back to receive their wage slips, but the staff refused to communicate with them. The ill-treatment classes as victimisation.
- An employer threatens to dismiss a worker because they intend to give evidence for a racial discrimination complaint raised by a colleague. Whether they're dismissed or not, the threat classes as racial victimisation.
- An individual disagrees with another colleague regarding their annual pay review. Since the dispute, the other colleague has spread rumours that the worker has made a complaint about them. They continue to make rude remarks to the worker in passing. Even though the worker hasn't complained, the unfair treatment is still considered victimisation.

Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability. For example, an individual with a disability is prevented from receiving a bonus because of the time they have taken off to receive treatment.

Gender Identity discrimination/harassment or victimisation: Gender identity refers to a person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth. Gender identity discrimination means treating individuals differently in the workplace or taking negative employment action against them because of their gender identity or gender expression. For example, being refused access to workplace restroom facilities and harassed by coworkers and supervisors on the basis of your gender identity.

Social Background discrimination/harassment or victimisation: This is the differential treatment of individuals based on social background or perceived social background, including class, education, wealth, occupation and social network.

Intersectionality

We all have overlapping characteristics and identities, and the unique way these connect influences our world experience. These overlapping characteristics are often referred to as intersectionality. At Debate Mate, we understand that discrimination can occur because of more than one characteristic. For example, a person who is discriminated against because of their cultural heritage might also be treated unfairly because of their gender, age, or sexual orientation. This can and often does create a cumulative disadvantage. We appreciate that people can experience multiple forms of discrimination simultaneously, which is why we aim to take account of intersectionality when investigating complaints about discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

What does an inclusive culture look like at Debate Mate?

All those who engage with Debate Mate will be encouraged to develop their skills and fulfill their potential. To achieve this, all leaders and managers should make fair, non-discriminatory decisions about employment-related matters, including:

1. Recruitment, Selection and Onboarding

Recruitment, promotion and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. Shortlisting and interviewing will be done by a diverse panel. We ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse section of the labour market and that our advertisements avoid stereotyping or wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on the grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children and should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, except in the very limited circumstances allowed by law: for example, to check that the applicant could perform an intrinsic part of the job (taking account of any reasonable adjustments), or to see if any adjustments might be needed at interview because of a disability.

Any information requested within equal opportunities monitoring forms will not be used for selection or decision-making purposes. Voluntary information will be requested as part of the onboarding process to ensure that new employees have a comfortable transition into working at Debate Mate.

2. Employment Status

We are committed to ensuring that part-time and fixed-term employees are treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate) unless different treatment is justified. (More information in our Flexible Working Policy).

3. Pay and Benefits

We are committed to paying the approved Living Wage relevant to the location of the employee and will be receiving our Living Wage Accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation this year. We provide a company mobile phone and laptop to all staff when they join and all resources needed to complete the job satisfactorily are provided in our offices. We have an expense system which allows staff to claim back any work based expenses promptly. Finally, we provide pension via the Government Autoenrollment scheme and employee contributions increase the longer you stay with the company.

4. Our Programmes

At every stage along the process of delivering our programmes, events and training sessions, we commit to looking at this in line with providing accessible and impactful programmes to everyone regardless of background. This means the topics that we debate, the examples and language that we use in our curriculum and online, our facilitators we use to deliver our sessions, the training of our facilitators and considerations related to age, disability, gender, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity,

race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation when running our events. Debate Mate programmes provide a safe and supportive space for people to grow in confidence.

5. Our Team

We strive to recruit and retain a team that reflects the communities we serve. As well as increasing the representation in our workforce, our focus is on creating an organisation where everyone wants to work and has the confidence to perform, learn and contribute. We'll do this by taking an inclusion-first approach in everything we do. We're looking at opportunities where we can adapt to be inclusive from the start, rather than someone needing to request it from us.

6. Debate Mate Board of Trustees

Our Board of Trustees has a broad range of expertise on it and ensures that it reflects the Debate Mate Programme and the students we work with. Two Board members are beneficiaries of the programme, both now in employment, and one Board member was a teacher in a Debate Mate school where she ran the programme.

7. Our Key Stakeholders

We are committed to working with organisations, schools, facilitators and suppliers that share the same values as ours around equal opportunities. We provide unconscious bias and equality training for our staff and mentors and ensure that we always have an equity officer at every event who carries out a briefing at the start of the event.

Training

As an organisation, we are focused on improving our own diversity and inclusion and in educating our staff on how we can be as inclusive and supportive as possible to each other. We have Diversity & Inclusion training annually and conduct an annual audit of all of our systems and processes as we can always improve the way we do things.

Breaches of this policy

We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in summary dismissal.

If you believe that you have suffered discrimination, you can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure or Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

No person may victimise you or retaliate against you because you raised a genuine concern in accordance with this policy. However, should investigations show that any false accusations have been made in bad faith, this may be treated as gross misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Monitoring, Assessment and Review

Debate Mate will monitor, assess and review the effectiveness of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the impact of all other relevant policies and practices on our stakeholders. The Debate Mate Board of Trustees will approve any revisions to the policy.

All of Debate Mate's activities related to equity, diversity and inclusion will continue to be monitored and reviewed. This work is overseen by the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee.

Debate Mate will measure our commitment through annual monitoring practices and a full bi-annual review. We will set organisational targets according to the different categories in the section 'What does an inclusive culture look like at Debate Mate'. These will be reviewed regularly, both by the SLT and by the EDI committee. We will also discuss these in our regular performance management meetings with staff that happen throughout the year. We are always open to further training to continue to improve our practice and will regularly ask for feedback from our key stakeholders.