

Equal Opportunities Policy in relation to Access to, and Fairness in, Assessment

A The BCU Awarding Body's commitment to equal opportunities in assessment

The BCU Awarding Body is committed to ensuring access to, and fairness in, assessment for all candidates regardless of their race, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, social class, political or religious beliefs and affiliations or other personal or professional characteristics which are acknowledged to have no bearing on assessment.

This commitment to access to, and equal opportunities in, assessment has been translated into a range of principles underpinning the awarding body's policies and procedures, which all its personnel, associates and centres are obliged to follow. This document gives details of those principles, policies and procedures.

B Principles, policies and procedures

1 Ensuring access and equality of opportunity while safeguarding the integrity of the qualifications

In setting the structure and content of the UKCC qualifications and in the processes and arrangements for assessment and awarding, the BCU Awarding Body will ensure access to assessment and equality of opportunity in assessment for all candidates while, at the same time, safeguarding the integrity of its qualifications. Below are listed the strategies which the awarding body will follow to ensure access to, and equality of opportunity in, assessment while safeguarding the integrity of its qualifications.

- All the awarding body's employees, the Senior External Verifier, External Verifiers, other associates and approved assessment centres are required to adhere to the principle that no candidate must at any time be discriminated against on the grounds of his or her race, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, social class, political or religious beliefs and affiliations or any other factors which are irrelevant to assessment. The adherence to this requirement will be subjected to stringent checks on an ongoing basis, as is described in section C below.
- It is a requirement for all approved centres that, before they register candidates, they should carefully assess their prior attainment and needs to make sure that those candidates are registered at the level of the qualification appropriate to them.
- At the time of registration, candidates will be asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Questionnaire, and the information yielded by the questionnaire will be recorded and monitored by the awarding body.
- In conducting assessment and reaching assessment decisions, centres' Assessors and Internal Verifiers and the awarding body's External Verifiers will have to ensure that it is only the candidates' skills, knowledge, understanding and competence that have a bearing on their assessment results, which should not be influenced by any other factors. No candidate must be either discriminated against or given an unfair advantage. Guidance to this effect has been issued to all the personnel concerned, and the adherence to it will be continuously monitored by the awarding body.

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- The UKCC paddlesport qualifications have been designed to promote flexible delivery in terms of timing and location in order to facilitate access to the widest possible range of candidates. Moreover, those qualifications are underpinned by the awarding body's belief that learning is a lifelong process and that people of all ages should be given access to its qualifications.
- While ensuring access to, and equality of opportunity in, assessment, the awarding body will safeguard the integrity of its UKCC qualifications at all times. All candidates will be assessed in relation to the specified assessment requirements, which will be the same for all of them and applied uniformly and consistently so as to safeguard the integrity of the BCU Awarding Body's qualifications. Instructions to this effect have been issued to the awarding body's Senior External Verifier, External Verifiers and approved centres and will be reinforced by a structured programme of training, standardisation and monitoring.
- The integrity of the awarding body's UKCC qualifications will be safeguarded also through its comprehensive arrangements for detecting, and counteracting the consequences of, malpractice. Those arrangements will ensure that only valid certificates are issued while guaranteeing fair treatment to everyone concerned.
- The awarding body will also ensure that its equal opportunities arrangements do not compromise the integrity of its qualifications in that, in allowing a range of reasonable adjustments to accommodate candidates' particular assessment requirements, it won't authorise any assistance which would directly affect performance in the attributes that are the focus of assessment, such as the candidates' coaching ability. This is set out in greater detail in subsection 3 below.

2 Nor creating unnecessary barriers to achievement

Neither the structure & content of the qualifications offered by the BCU Awarding Body nor its processes and arrangements for assessment and awarding will create unnecessary barriers to achievement. The following are the ways in which the awarding body will ensure that its qualifications and assessment materials and procedures do not create such barriers.

- The UKCC qualification specifications and assessment materials:
 - (i) are explicit about what is to be assessed through specifying detailed learning outcomes;
 - (ii) take account of the needs of all candidates for whom they are designed;
 - (iii) do not include any hidden or additional requirements;
 - (iv) are expressed in a plain, clear, accessible and inoffensive language which is appropriate to the qualification;
 - (v) are free from any stereotypical, biased or discriminatory content; and
 - (vi) ensure that assessment is fit for purpose and, where relevant, allows for a variety of forms of evidence.
- The BCU Awarding Body's processes and arrangements for assessment and awarding won't create unnecessary barriers to achievement because they have been established on the principles of fairness, transparency, clarity, explicitness, responsiveness and manageability, which are enshrined in all its documentation.
- Assessment will be based on published specifications of skills, knowledge, understanding and competencies, which are freely available both to centres and to candidates and which will provide all candidates with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their ability to meet the specified assessment criteria.
- All candidates who have the potential to make competent coaches will be able to access assessment, even if they require alternative arrangements, as is described below.

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3 Guaranteeing fair assessment for all candidates, including those with particular assessment requirements

The UKCC qualifications offered by the BCU Awarding Body and its assessment and awarding procedures guarantee fair assessment for all candidates, including those with particular assessment requirements. The following are the arrangements ensuring fair assessment for all.

- The awarding body will allow a range of reasonable adjustments to accommodate candidates' disabilities and impairments – provided such assistance does not directly affect performance in the attributes that are the focus of assessment, such as the candidates' coaching ability. Arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements can be found in the document entitled Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedures and in Section 11 of the Approved Assessment Centre Handbook.
- The reasonable adjustments for candidates with particular assessment requirements will be underpinned by the principle of fairness to all in that they will:
 - (i) not invalidate the assessment requirements set out in qualification specifications, which won't be changed under any circumstances;
 - (ii) reflect the current needs of the individual candidates and, as far as is practicable, their usual methods of working;
 - (iii) not give the candidates an unfair advantage over other candidates; and
 - (iv) maintain the relevance, reliability and comparability of assessment.
- The BCU Awarding Body will also give special consideration to those candidates who were affected by unforeseen circumstances at the time of assessment. Arrangements for special consideration are outlined in the document entitled Special Consideration Policy and Procedures and in Section 12 of the Approved Assessment Centre Handbook. Both documents, and further guidance in relation to fairness in assessment, can be obtained from the awarding body's Manager or the Quality Assurance and Control Coordinator.
- The awarding body requires that its approved centres should, on registering candidates, make it clear to them that they may request support to meet their individual needs and that all requests considered justifiable by the BCU Awarding Body will be granted.
- The principle of fairness in assessment – apart from being enshrined in this policy, which is binding on all the awarding body's personnel, associates and centres – has been emphasised in the Guidance for Qualification and Assessment Materials Developers and Guidance for the Senior External Verifier and External Verifiers, and the awarding body's monitoring of their adherence to this principle will be ongoing.

4 Taking account of all relevant equal opportunities legislation

In setting the structure and content of the qualifications and in the processes and arrangements for assessment and awarding, the BCU Awarding Body has taken into account all current legislation in relation to equality of opportunity in the following ways.

- The pieces of equal opportunities legislation listed below have informed the development of all the awarding body's UKCC qualifications and underpin its policies and procedures.
 - (i) Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986
 - (ii) Race Relations Act 1976
 - (iii) Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 - (iv) Human Rights Act 1998

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- (v) Gender Reassignment Act 1999
- (vi) Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- (vii) Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- (viii) European Directives on Equal Treatment

- The developers of the BCU Awarding Body UKCC qualifications and assessment materials are instructed, when designing and developing them, to take account not only of the legislation related to health & safety and other paddlesport-specific aspects but also of all the relevant equal opportunities legislation.
- The Awarding Body Manager is required to be familiar with the equal opportunities legislation and is responsible for ensuring the organisation's adherence to it through monitoring this aspect and, if necessary, providing the awarding body's employees and associates, such as the Senior External Verifier and External Verifiers, with training, guidance and advice.
- All centres, on seeking the awarding body's approval, are required to undertake to use, for assessment purposes, premises and/or a sport environment that provide access to all candidates in accordance with the relevant legislation. They are also expected to comply with the equal opportunities legislation in all their arrangements for in-centre assessment.

C The monitoring of equal opportunities

The BCU Awarding Body attaches utmost importance to ensuring that all its assessment personnel, as well as those of the approved centres, follow its equal opportunities policy to the letter. To ensure compliance, it will continuously monitor and evaluate its staff's, associates' and centres' adherence to this policy.

Within the awarding body, the Manager has the overall responsibility for equal opportunities in relation to assessment, and the monitoring and evaluation of the organisation's compliance with the equal opportunities policy will form a part of its annual self-assessment exercise overseen by the Executive Committee.

Centres' adherence to this policy will be monitored by the Senior External Verifier and External Verifiers and will also feed into the awarding body's self-assessment.

D Complaints and appeals against breaches of this policy

The BCU Awarding Body will treat any reports of breaches of its equal opportunities policy very seriously and will act decisively and promptly to ensure that those incidents have no lasting implications and won't occur again.

Candidates who believe that they have been discriminated against either in accessing, or during, assessment will, in the first instance, be able to lodge a complaint with the Qualifications Coordinator, who will refer it to the awarding body's Manager if appropriate.

If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved internally, the centre may, on the candidate's behalf, submit a formal appeal, which will be adjudicated by the Appeals Panel comprising at least one member who will be entirely independent of the awarding body.

Complaints should be made within one month of the alleged discrimination occurring, while appeals should be submitted in accordance with the guidance given in the document entitled Enquiries and Appeals Procedures, which can be also found in Section 13 of the Approved Assessment Centre Handbook.