



Equal Opportunities Policy Board Approved 14/2/2015

This policy is a step towards achieving the standards set out in 'The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport' and reinforces the position that rowing as a sport is open to all.

We ask that the principles of the policy are adopted by all member clubs and representatives of Rowing Ireland within the overall framework of this policy.

RI is committed to the principle and practice of promoting equal opportunities and celebrates the diversity of people. We understand that these two concepts are not the same but are complementary. Without recognising and, most importantly, valuing differences between people, there cannot be true equality of opportunity. Moreover RI promotes individual life-enhancing opportunities that respect all people.

Definitions

Equality of opportunity is: Creating an even platform which enables everyone to access the same opportunities. It is backed by legislation to prevent unfair discrimination including those based on prejudices against any group.

Diversity is: Understanding and valuing the differences between people and believing that harnessing these differences will create a more productive working and sporting environment and an enriching life experience where talents are fully utilised and organisational goals are met.

The Equality Standard for Sport

Sports equity is about fairness and inclusion in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them. It involves changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure that it becomes equally accessible to all members of society.

The following policy document sets out a number of proactive steps that will be taken to ensure the principles of equality of opportunity and equity are adhered to throughout Rowing Ireland.

1. Rowing Ireland Statement of Intent

Rowing Ireland is committed to ensuring that equity is incorporated across all aspects of its development. In doing so it acknowledges and adopts the following definition of sports equity:

Sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them. It is about changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure it becomes equally accessible to everyone in society.

- Rowing Ireland respects the rights, dignity and worth of every person and will treat everyone fairly within the context of their sport, regardless of religious belief, political opinion, racial or ethnic group (including members of the Irish Traveller community), age, marital and/or family status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability or persons without, and persons with dependants and persons without.
- Rowing Ireland is committed to everyone having the right to enjoy their sport in an environment free from threat of intimidation, harassment and abuse.
- Rowing Ireland participants have a responsibility to oppose discriminatory behaviour and promote equality of opportunity.
- Rowing Ireland will deal with any incidence of discriminatory behaviour seriously, according to Rowing Ireland disciplinary procedures.

2. Purpose

2.1 RI recognises that certain sections of the community have been affected by past discrimination and may have been denied the opportunity to participate equally and fully in sport at all levels.

2.2 This policy has been produced to prevent/tackle any potential/current discrimination or other unfair treatment, whether intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect, against its employees, members and volunteers.

3. Commitment to Action. Rowing Ireland will:

- Provide appropriate training to all of its employees and key volunteers to raise awareness of individual and corporate responsibilities.
- Embed Equal Opportunities into all policies, plans and strategies.
- Publicise this policy to all members, volunteers, participants, coaches, and employees through its website.
- Make this policy available to employees through the staff handbook and to all new members of staff through the induction process.
- Ensure that equality is a standing item at each board meeting.
- Appoint the Chief Executive Officer to be an 'Equality Champion'.
- Audit and monitor the profile of staff and board members in line with the requirements of the Equality Standard.

RI recognises that, in some cases, to help promote equality of opportunity, unequal effort is required and, if appropriate, will consider positive action to tackle underrepresentation.

4. Legal Requirements

4.1 RI is required by law not to discriminate against its employees and recognises its legal obligations under, and will abide by the requirements of, the following:

RoI Legislation

- The Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004
- The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004
- The National Disability Authority Act 1999

NI Legislation

- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976, as amended
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, as amended
- Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998, as amended
- Equal Pay Act (NI) 1970, as amended
- Northern Ireland Act 1998

And also any later amendments to the above acts/regulations, or future acts/regulations that are relevant to RI.

4.2 RI will seek advice each time the policy is reviewed to ensure it continues to comply with all legislation requirements.

5. Discrimination, Harassment, Victimisation and Bullying

5.1 Discrimination can take the following forms:

- **Direct Discrimination.** This means treating someone less favourably than you would treat others in the same circumstances on the basis of a protected characteristic.
- **Indirect Discrimination.** This occurs when a criterion requirement or practice is applied equally to all, but which has a disproportionate and detrimental effect on one sector of society, because fewer from that sector can comply with it and the requirement cannot be justified.

5.2 Harassment is defined as inappropriate actions, behaviour, comments or physical contact that is unwanted and unreasonable and causes offence to the recipient. RI is committed to ensuring that its employees, members, participants and volunteers are able to conduct their activities free from harassment or intimidation.

5.3 Victimisation occurs when someone is treated less favourably than others because he or she has taken action against RI under one of the relevant Acts/regulations (as previously outlined) or has helped another, for example by providing information about discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behaviour.

5.4 Bullying has been defined as the persistent demeaning and downgrading of people through words or actions that gradually erode self-confidence and undermine self-esteem.

5.5 RI regards discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or bullying, as described above, as potentially serious misconduct and any employee, volunteer or member who discriminates

against, harasses, victimises, or bullies any other person may be liable to appropriate disciplinary action.

6. Responsibility, Implementation and Communication

6.1 The following responsibilities will apply:

6.1.1 The RI Board is responsible for ensuring that this Equal Opportunities Policy is followed and for dealing with any actual or potential breaches.

6.1.2 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

6.1.3 A specific member of staff, designated by the Chief Executive, has the overall responsibility for achieving the equity action plan as this will form part of their work programme.

6.1.4 All employees, volunteers and members have responsibilities to respect, act in accordance with and thereby support and promote the spirit and intentions of the policy and, where appropriate, individual work programmes will be amended to include equity related tasks.

6.2 The policy will be implemented immediately following Board agreement and, at a corporate level, will result in the following:

6.2.1 A copy of this document will be available to all staff (both permanent and contract), members and volunteers of RI.

6.2.2 RI will take measures to ensure that its employment practices are non-discriminatory.

6.2.3 No job applicant will be placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions which are not necessary to the performance of the job or which constitute unfair discrimination.

6.2.4 A planned approach will be adopted to eliminate barriers which discriminate.

6.2.5 RI will ensure that consultants and advisers can demonstrate their commitment to the principles and practice of equity and that they abide by this policy.

6.3 The policy will be communicated in the following ways:

6.3.1 It will be part of the staff handbook and reference will be made to it in any codes of conduct.

6.3.2 It will be covered in all staff and volunteer induction training.

6.3.3 RI will publicise the policy to all members, volunteers and employees through its website, along with any updates.

6.3.4 At time of review, a mechanism will be put in place to allow all staff, members and volunteers to be part of the process.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 Once approved, the policy will apply for three years before a formal review takes place, unless any proposal to the Board, or legislation change, requires an interim review and/or amendment.

7.2 The equity action plan, created to ensure the intent of the policy is delivered, will be reviewed by the Chief Executive and the member of staff with the responsibility for its implementation, on a quarterly basis.

7.3 As part of the RI operational plan, the equity action plan will be reviewed by the Board on a six monthly basis.

7.4 On an annual basis, statistical information will be produced by the Chief Executive for the Board, and will be published internally and externally, to show the impact of this policy.

8. Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

8.1 To safeguard individual rights under the policy, an employee, volunteer or member who believes he/she has suffered inequitable treatment within the scope of the policy may raise the matter through the appropriate grievance procedure.

8.2 Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any employee, volunteer or member who violates this Policy.

8.3 An individual may raise any grievance and no employee, volunteer or member will be penalised for doing so unless it is untrue and not made in good faith.

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Changes</i>
1.0	6 th February 2015	H. Adams	New Version