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**EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY**

Adopted January 2020

Next Review: January 2022

The Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland (JABS) is committed to ensuring that all selection processes are fair and open and that all applicants receive equal treatment.

The Equality Act 2010 gives public authorities a duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between diverse groups.

JABS makes individual recommendations for judicial office solely on merit, in accordance with one of the Board’s primary statutory obligations. The Board also has a statutory duty to have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of individuals available for selection to be recommended for appointment to judicial office. JABS keeps this duty in mind in all that it does and has a stated strategic aim to:

 *Encourage diversity in the range of individuals available for selection.*

The Board acknowledges that there should be equality of opportunity for those eligible to apply. In a democratic society the judiciary should reflect the diversity of society and the legal profession as a whole. We recognise that diversity encompasses more than protected characteristics. This diversity will help to maintain public trust and confidence. Our main priorities will be:

* To understand how diverse Scotland’s judiciary currently is.
* To collaborate with others in order to encourage diversity in the range of applicants for judicial office.
* To ensure that our appointment processes are compatible with the pursuit of diversity, and equality of opportunity.
* To provide the appropriate level of information and attract a broad range of applicants.
* To develop and implement a communications plan that ensures we get the right messages to the right people at the right time.
* To explore the approach to promoting diversity in other legal systems.

The Board encourages and welcomes applications from the widest possible range of applicants regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In addition to the statutorily protected characteristics, we encourage diversity and welcome applications from individuals in a wide range of circumstances, including geography as well as, social, cultural or economic disadvantage. The Board monitors aspects of the diversity profile of all appointment rounds and tracks applicants’ progress at each stage of the process: after applications are received, after short-listing and after interview.

The equal opportunities questionnaire is separated from the application form upon receipt and is not seen by the Board Members. The information contained in it will not be held or otherwise processed in a manner which would allow the Board Members to identify applicants or otherwise to link that information with them. The information will not influence applications in any respect.

The Board is collaborating with stakeholder partners in the development of data on the ‘eligible pool’ in conjunction with the Diversity Steering Group. We will publish diversity statistics at least in relation to certain protected characteristics provided for in the Equality Act 2010 in our Annual Report.

To ensure we deliver on our objectives, we will:

* Develop and implement an Engagement Strategy that includes diversity.
* Make sure Board Members and staff understand what diversity and equal opportunities mean for JABS.
* Work with external partners to attract diverse applicants.
* Ensure our online application process is accessible for all applicants.
* Provide all reasonable adjustments on request.
* Evaluate how best to encourage under-represented groups who want to apply to join the judiciary to remove any perceived barriers to entry.

The Board will work with the Law Society of Scotland and the Faculty of Advocates to gather further information from underrepresented diverse groups and individuals to learn more about their attitudes to judicial office and whether any barriers, real or perceived, need to be addressed or measures put in place to encourage diverse individuals to apply and to meet the three general equality duties of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between diverse groups.

The Board will work with the legal profession and judiciary to help them to become more active in promoting applications for judicial office among those who are currently not coming forward, particularly individuals from under-represented groups.