

Year/Level: 12

Subject: Office Technology

Strand : 2	EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES
Sub Strand : 2.1	OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
Content Learning Outcome	At the end of this chapter, students should be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• differentiate equal employment opportunity from affirmative action• identify the different forms of discrimination and harassment• explain five rights and responsibilities of employers and employees

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is treating someone less favorably than someone else:

In the same or similar circumstances on one or more of the grounds just listed

- Because of characteristics that apply to a person of a particular group
- By imposing an unreasonable condition that some people of a particular group are less able to meet than others

Discrimination against employees

As an employee, you might also be discriminated against if you are inhibited or prevented, because of your gender, race, disability, etc., from:

- Joining a training program
- Applying for a promotion or transfer
- Taking part in meetings
- Having equal access to facilities

Discrimination in staff recruitment

It is illegal to discriminate against people at job interviews by asking questions about their beliefs, their sexual preferences, whether or not they intend to have children, and so on. Interviewers should not ask personal questions such as the following:

- Have you completed your family?
- What are your childcare arrangements?
- Are you still under treatment for X, or how many sick days did you take last year?
- Were you born in Australia? Do you speak English at home?

Instead, they should focus on the job's requirements, as follows:

- This job requires interstate travel. How flexible are you with regard to overtime or out-of – hours activities?
- This job requires heavy lifting/sitting at a computer terminal for long periods of time. Are you able to do this?
- In this job you will need to write detailed reports. Would you please spend the next 10 minutes completing this writing exercise?
- Job advertisements should show the vacancy is open to every qualified person. Unacceptable words are 'waitress', 'manageress', 'he' or 'she', 'him' or 'her', 'woman' or 'man', 'boy' or 'girl', 'single' or 'married'. Acceptable alternatives are worker, personal office assistant, principal, cleaner, bar attendant, employee,

supervisor, sales assistant, clerk, 'he/she'.

- **Indirect discrimination**
- Discrimination is sometimes not directed at a specific person or persons but is built into the system. An example here is the setting of a condition with which one group can comply more easily than another, such as making unbroken service a requirement for promotion. This discriminates against women who take maternity leave.
- **Sexual harassment in employment**
- Under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth) it is unlawful for an employer or a potential employer to sexually harass any worker. It is unlawful if the subject has reason to believe that they will be disadvantaged in any way at work by refusing to accept or tolerate the sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is behaviour of a sexual nature that is unwelcome, unsolicited and unreciprocated. It can be physical, verbal or written and can consist of any or all of the following:
 - Unwelcome comments about someone's sex life or physical appearance
 - Suggestive behaviour such as leering or ogling
 - Unnecessary familiarity such as brushing up against someone
 - Sexual jokes, offensive telephone calls, photographs, reading matter or objects
 - Sexual propositions or continual requests for dates
 - Physical contact such as touching or fondling
 - Indecent assault or rape (these are criminal offences)

Affirmative action

The Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986 (Commonwealth) **is a positive force in the workplace helping to eliminate the problems and barriers women face in employment.**

Affirmative action is about getting the best person for the job, whether that person is male or female. The goal of affirmative action is equal employment opportunities for women, and affirmative action provides the following means to this end:

- Employers are required to issue a policy statement to all employees, making it clear that the organisation is committed to equal opportunity for its female employees.
- Responsibility for affirmative action should be given to a person with authority in the organisation.
- Consultation between management, employees and (where appropriate) unions should take place to determine if the distribution of work, training and promotion opportunities is done a basis of sexual equality.

Activity

1. i. What is sexual harassment?

- ii) Write down the forms of sexual harassment in a workplace.

2. What is the goal of affirmative action?

