

This lesson plan is the first of two lessons about the Equality Act (2010) and its importance in the workplace. Lesson 1 will support your learners to explore the Act, introduce the nine protected characteristics within it, and think about different types of unlawful conduct. These lessons are aimed at learners studying Business Management for SQA National 5 or Higher examinations.

Curriculum for Excellence Links

SQA Course Criteria	Benchmarks
Topic: Legislation National 5 Business Management Course Specification (May 2024)	Learner can name and describe features of current legislation, including the Equality Act (2010). National 5 Business Management Course Specification (May 2024)
Topic: Legislation Higher Business Management Course Specification (May 2024)	Learners should be aware of the impact of current employment legislation on organisations and employees, for example: the Equality Act (2010), including a description of the types of discrimination at work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct discrimination • discrimination by association • discrimination by perception • indirect discrimination • victimisation • harassment Higher Business Management Course Specification (May 2024)

LGBT Inclusive Education Learning Themes

Understanding the Equality Act (2010), UNCRC and Human Rights
Identifying prejudice, discrimination, and bullying (including homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia)
Recognising and challenging gender stereotypes
Celebrating diversity and difference

Equality Act Characteristics Covered

Age
Disability
Gender Reassignment
Marriage and Civil Partnership
Pregnancy and Maternity
Race
Religion or Belief
Sex
Sexual Orientation

Learning Intentions

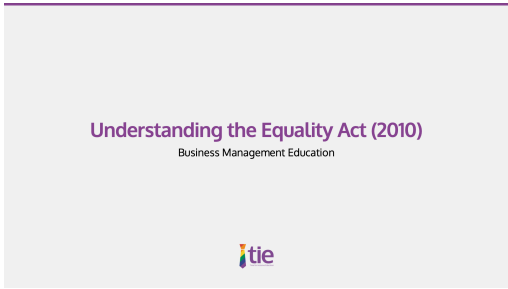
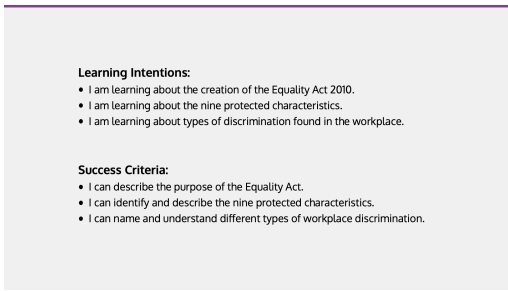
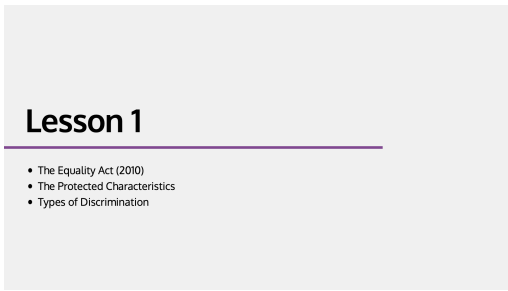

I am learning about the creation of the Equality Act (2010).
I am learning about the nine protected characteristics.
I am learning about types of discrimination found in the workplace.

Success Criteria
I can describe the purpose of the Equality Act (2010).
I can identify and describe the nine protected characteristics.
I can name and understand different types of workplace discrimination.

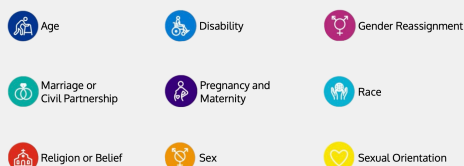
Resources accompanying this lesson

- 'Lesson 1 - Powerpoint Slides'
- 'Lesson 1 - Matching Cards Task' PDF document

Lesson Plan

Powerpoint Slide	Teaching Notes
 <p>Understanding the Equality Act (2010) Business Management Education</p> <p>tie</p>	<p>Title page - introducing the topic.</p>
 <p>Learning Intentions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning about the creation of the Equality Act 2010. • I am learning about the nine protected characteristics. • I am learning about types of discrimination found in the workplace. <p>Success Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can describe the purpose of the Equality Act. • I can identify and describe the nine protected characteristics. • I can name and understand different types of workplace discrimination. 	<p>Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for Lesson 1.</p>
 <p>Lesson 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Equality Act (2010) • The Protected Characteristics • Types of Discrimination 	<p>Introduce the word 'legislation' to the learners. Ask them if they know another word for this, you are looking for the 'law'.</p> <p>Consider asking them where else they might be learning about legislation, possible subjects are Modern Studies, History, and PHSE.</p> <p>To understand where else the learners may have heard about legislation, ask if they have heard about it outside of school. They might have heard it on the news, on social media, or from TV programmes.</p>
 <p>What is the Equality Act (2010)?</p> <p>The Equality Act (2010) is a set of rules that makes sure everyone is treated fairly and equally. It brought together 116 separate pieces of legislation into one Act to make it easier to use.</p> <p>The nine main pieces of legislation that were merged were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Equal Pay Act (1970) • The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) • The Race Relations Act (1976) • The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) • The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003) • The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003) • The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (2006) • The Equality Act (2006), Part 2 • The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2007) 	<p>Cover the information in this slide with learners in whichever manner suits your teaching style.</p> <p>This slide introduces the purpose of the Equality Act (2010) and the legislation it consolidated.</p> <p>In this unit, we will focus on the Equality Act (2010). This applies in Scotland, England, and Wales - as Northern Ireland still has some of the older legislation rather than the codified 2010 Act.</p>

Protected Characteristics



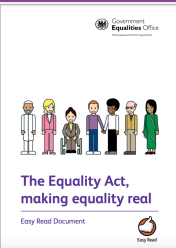
Introduce your learners to the nine protected characteristics included in the Equality Act (2010).

Each protected characteristic appears on a click to let you discuss them with your learners. You may want to ask your learners to tell you what they think the protected characteristics are first and then show them, or go through them one at a time.

It is important for learners to understand that **we all have protected characteristics** and therefore we are all legally protected from discrimination. Can they identify which characteristics we all have?

Help your learners to understand that by simplifying legislation and protecting characteristics, the Equality Act aims to create a fairer society for all of us, improve public services, and help businesses perform well.

Timeline to the Equality Act (2010)



This interactive activity will help you to:

- Identify the importance of the key precursor legislation that led to the Equality Act (2010)
- Explain why existing anti-discrimination laws were consolidated into one Act
- List and define the nine protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act (2010)

This guided activity requires device access for learners. If you do not intend to use this, you can skip this slide.

Please share the following link with your learners to complete in guided class discussion: <https://www.thinglink.com/coursecard/2021324832364298726>

This interactive scenario helps them explore the background to the introduction of the Equality Act in detail, from the precursor legislation to the protected characteristics which are safeguarded by it.

You may find the following notes useful if you want to study the timeline in more detail with your learners. Sections marked with an * are not included in the learner activity; they are extra information that you could share with your learners.

The activity highlights racial segregation in 1960s UK. For further information on "the Colour Bar" that existed in public houses in the UK, please see: [What was the Colour Bar?](#)

An interesting case study on the British Black Power Movement can be found here: [Darcus Howe and Britain's Black Power Movement](#). This illustrates racism in Britain in the 1960s.

*The Race Relations Act (1976) legislation can be found here: [Race Relations Act \(1976\)](#)

If you would like your learners to know more about this, the BBC have an easy-to-read overview here: [What was the Race Relations Act?](#)

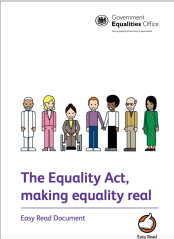
*Further information can be found here: [History of British Race Relations Legislation](#)

It also highlights women in the workplace. To help your learners think more about women in the workplace, they have been introduced to the following website: [Striking Women post WWII](#). The post-WWII workplace is discussed here.

*You will also find a case study of the women's strike at the Ford factory in Dagenham on this website. Here is a link to the IMDB page for the film about the strike: [Made in Dagenham](#). The young people might be aware of the film and be able to use that awareness to engage with the plight of these women.

Along with women striking for their rights at the Ford factory in Dagenham. You could introduce the learners to the Glasgow Women's Library, where they can find further information about women fighting for equal rights: [Glasgow Women's Library](#).

Timeline to the Equality Act (2010)



This interactive activity will help you to:

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Notes continued

*The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) legislation can be found here: [Sex Discrimination Act \(1975\)](#)

If you would like your learners to know more about this, here are news articles from the BBC and the Guardian that were published when the law was enacted: [Laws to End the Battle of the Sexes](#) and [Equal Pay Packet with Strings](#). The first article is included in your learners' activity.

You may find it useful to introduce your learners to Section 28 when they are exploring the sexual orientation protected characteristic case study. The following video clips will help with your explanation:

This footage from BBC Newsround will help your learners understand the clause: [What was Section 28?](#)

[Ian McKellen Talking about Section 28](#) on Terry Wogan's talk show highlights the reasons people were opposed to the clause.

This BBC Newsnight report highlights the impact of the clause 30 years on: [Gay Rights Under Section 28](#).

*NOTE:

We have a resource in development which will help with understanding of the history and impact of Section 28 in Scotland. This resource will be available in late 2025 and can be accessed here: [Secondary Resources](#)

*The Equality Act legislation can be found here: [The Equality Act \(2010\)](#)

*This [BBC article](#) from 2010 covers the changes the law made in business.

*DISCUSSION:

Discuss the length of time the Equality Act took to come into effect with your learners. Why do they think it took so long for some of the protected characteristics to be safeguarded?

*Help your learners to understand that the law is looked at and reviewed to make sure it is fit for purpose.

*You can access the easy-read version of the Equality Act (2010) [here](#).

*You may want to discuss action planning with your learners at this point. If they were in charge of a company, what measures could they put in place to ensure they supported all employees? For example, no age on the application form, paternity support, equal pay, etc.

Types of Unlawful Conduct

Let's see if you can work out the meanings for the different types of unlawful conduct defined in the Equality Act (2010) by matching the cards.



Task

A handout has been supplied with a set of matching cards. To use this with your class, you should print sets of the cards, and laminate them if possible.

The Equality Act (2010) defines different types of unlawful conduct including: direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

Each type of unlawful conduct is named and defined in the cards.

Once printed, you can ask your learners to match the name to the definition to help them learn them.

Types of Discrimination

Direct Discrimination

Someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination

Occurs when a rule or policy applies to everyone equally but disadvantages a particular protected characteristic. This may be legal if there is 'objective justification' - meaning it can be proven that the rule or policy was put in place for a legitimate reason and is proportionate, appropriate, and necessary.

Discrimination by Perception

Discrimination against someone because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic.

Discrimination by Association

Discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a particular protected characteristic.

Cover the information in this slide with learners in whichever manner suits your teaching style.

This slides defines 4 types of discrimination set out in the Equality Act.

There are examples of each in the next lesson in this series, but you may find it useful to give examples as you are defining them. The [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#) and [Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(ACAS\)](#) provide additional examples that could be used to complement your teaching intentions.

Here are some you could use:

Direct discrimination: A woman is denied a promotion because her manager thinks the job is more suited to a man, even though she is more qualified for the role. This could be direct discrimination because of her sex, which is a protected characteristic under the Act.

Indirect discrimination: A job advert for a salesperson says that all applicants must have spent at least 10 years working in retail. The business could be indirectly discriminating based on age, because the advert could exclude younger people who might be qualified for the job.

Discrimination by perception: A male employee is denied a promotion because his employer assumes he is gay based on stereotypes about his appearance. He has never shared his sexual orientation at work but he is heterosexual. This could be sexual orientation discrimination by perception based on the assumption that he is gay.

Discrimination by association: A father who has been caring for his disabled son has to take time off of work whenever his son is sick or has medical appointments. The employer does not seem to like this, and eventually ends his employment. This could be direct disability discrimination by association with his son.

Optional Extension Task - Exceptions

There are some exceptions (situations where equality law applies differently) - including occupational requirements for a particular job, national security, and obeying another law. These have to be objectively justified.

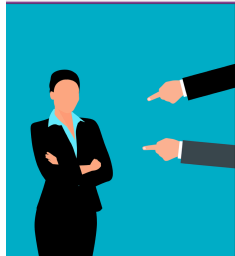
The EHRC provides specific information about each of these [here](#).

An optional extension task at this stage, depending on the stage and knowledge of the class, could be asking learners to consider whether there might some occasions where equality law might apply differently, and where discrimination might be able to be justified.

The EHRC provides the example of an exception for an occupational requirement for a religion or belief organisation:

"A Humanist organisation which promotes humanist philosophy and principles would probably be able to apply an occupational requirement for its chief executive to be a Humanist. If the chief executive stopped being a Humanist, the organisation could dismiss them without this being unlawful discrimination." (EHRC, 2021)

Harassment and Victimisation



Harassment

Unwanted behaviour that someone finds offensive and is connected to a protected characteristic.

This has to have the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or creating a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating or offensive environment for them. Employees can complain of behaviour they find offensive, even if it is not directed at them.

Victimisation

Someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or claim under the Equality Act (2010).

Cover the information in this slide with learners in whichever manner suits your teaching style.

This slide defines other unlawful conduct included in the Equality Act: harassment and victimisation. A video from EHRC is available [here](#), and can be used to help explain this to learners.

There are examples of each in the next lesson in this unit, but you may find it useful to give examples as you are defining them. Here are some you could use:

Harassment: A person with a hearing impairment starts a new job. They attend meetings with support from hearing aids. Some colleagues repeatedly mock the way the person speaks and roll their eyes whenever the person asks for clarification of what's been said in the meeting. This makes the workplace a hostile and offensive environment for the person. This could be harassment related to disability, a protected characteristic under the Act.

Victimisation: Racist comments have been made during team meetings. An employee reports this. After the complaint, they are excluded from the team meeting and given shifts different to their usual pattern. They are being treated unfairly due to the complaint. This is likely to be victimisation, which is unlawful under the Act.



Age

Definition:

Age is a protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010) and refers to how old a person is. This covers all ages.

How might this look?

Discrimination based on age might occur when an older person is not hired for a job because the employer assumes they won't be as 'tech-savvy' as a younger candidate.

This slide covers age discrimination. This is just one example of how a person can be discriminated against because of their age.

DISCUSSION:

Ask the learners for other ways people might be discriminated against because of age, especially people their age.

Other topics you may want to cover:

- B&Q have a policy to recruit people who have retired from other jobs, giving them access to part-time jobs. Your learners could research the reasons this company decided to do this.
- You could discuss the minimum wage tier system. Is it fair? Your learners could research this and come up with reasons for and against the tier system for a class discussion.

The EHRC have a series of videos that could be used to help your learners understand different types of discrimination. Find them [HERE](#). These videos can be used to help with any of the following 9 slides.



Disability

Definition:

Disability refers to a physical or mental condition that makes it difficult for a person to do certain activities.

How might this look?

Discrimination based on disability could be refusing to provide wheelchair access to a public building, making it impossible for people with mobility impairments to enter.

This slide covers disability discrimination. This is just one example of how a person can be discriminated against because of a disability.

DISCUSSION:

You can discuss different types of disability here that would also be protected, for example, disabilities which you can't see (hidden disabilities), and different types of neurodivergence.

Other topics you may want to cover:

- Older buildings being criticised for not having wheelchair access. How do you solve that? A successful legal case was of a wheelchair user being denied entry to the [Polo Lounge in Glasgow](#).
- You could discuss the use of sunflower lanyards to show hidden (non-visual) disabilities, as part of the [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme](#).
- Finally, supporting staff with their mental health could be discussed. How do your learners think this could be done effectively in workplaces?



Race

Definition:

Race is a protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010) and refers to a person's ethnic or national origin.

How might this look?

Discrimination based on race may involve unequal treatment in employment opportunities or being refused service at a restaurant due to one's ethnicity.

This slide covers race discrimination. This is just one example of how a person can be discriminated against because of their race, colour, nationality, or ethnic or national origins.

DISCUSSION:

- Your learners will likely be very aware of racism. A guided discussion can consider other ways people might experience discrimination because of their race - including everyday and structural examples (e.g. being overlooked for promotion, racial profiling).
- You can explain here that the Equality Act allows for **positive action** (e.g. targeted training or outreach) to help reduce underrepresentation and disadvantage.



Marriage and Civil Partnership

Definition:

Marriage and civil partnership refers to legal unions between two individuals.

How might this look?

Discrimination based on marriage and civil partnership could include refusing to promote or employ someone because they are married (e.g. a policy that managers must be single).

This slide covers marriage and civil partnership discrimination. This is just one example of discrimination on this basis.

DISCUSSION:

- The law protects people from discrimination because they are married or in a civil partnership. Tribunals are strict - to succeed, someone must show that the less favourable treatment was because of their marriage status or for being in a civil partnership, and not because of personal disagreements or other unrelated issues.



Gender Reassignment

Definition:

Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010). It refers to the process of changing one's gender.

How might this look?

Direct gender reassignment discrimination might occur if a person is denied a job because the employer finds out that they are transgender.

This slide covers gender reassignment discrimination, which protects transgender people from discrimination. This is just one example of how a transgender person can be discriminated against.

DISCUSSION:

In the Act, people are protected from gender reassignment discrimination at all stages - including when they are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process to reassign their sex.

Other topics you may want to cover:

- A retail assistant at Primark [experienced harassment](#) in the workplace for being transgender, and eventually had to leave employment (constructive dismissal) because of that treatment. The case was successful and the Employment Tribunal awarded damages of over £47,000 in 2018.



Pregnancy and Maternity

Definition:

Pregnancy and maternity refers to being pregnant or expecting a child and the period following childbirth.

How might this look?

Discrimination against pregnancy and maternity might occur if a pregnant woman is overlooked for promotion at work because her employer assumes she won't be able to commit to the job after giving birth.

This slide covers pregnancy and maternity discrimination. This is just one example of how someone can be discriminated against when they are pregnant or have recently given birth.

Inform your learners that in equality law, maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination continues for 26 weeks after giving birth, and includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

DISCUSSION:

- Ask the learners for other ways people might be discriminated against when they are having a baby. What about paternity? Should maternity leave be able to be split equally between partners?
- What do your learners know about 'keeping in touch days'? Why might workplaces use them?
- You can discuss adoption and fostering here to highlight diverse families, including LGBT parents' rights as part of the conversation.



Religion or Belief

Definition:

Religion or belief is a protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010). It refers to a person's faith, religious beliefs (or lack of), or philosophical beliefs.

How might this look?

Discrimination based on religion or belief could be refusing to allow an employee time off from work to observe religious holidays or practices.

This slide covers religion or belief discrimination. This is just one example of how a person can be discriminated against because their religion, religious belief, or philosophical belief (including a lack of belief).

DISCUSSION:

- Ask learners for other ways people might be discriminated against because of their religion or belief - at school, in the workplace, in shops or restaurants, or when using services.

The following links give you two possible discussion topics:

[Displaying faith symbols at work.](#)

[Nando's Halal Chicken - why only some restaurants?](#)

- Learners may associate this protected characteristic only with religious belief, but make sure they understand that certain deeply held non-religious beliefs (e.g. ethical veganism) can also be protected if they meet specific criteria set out in the Grainger Test.

The Grainger Test requires that a belief:

1. Is genuinely held.
2. Is more than an opinion or viewpoint.
3. Concerns a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.
4. Is coherent and serious.
5. Is worthy of respect in a democratic society and does not conflict with the fundamental rights of others.

This means not all beliefs are protected - for example, beliefs that promote harm towards others would most likely fail the test.



Sex

Definition:

Sex is a protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010). The Act protects people from discrimination because they are male or female.

How might this look?

Discrimination based on sex might occur if a company pays male employees higher salaries than female employees for the same job.

This slide covers sex discrimination. This is just one example of how a person can be discriminated against because of their sex. For the purposes of the Equality Act (2010), sex refers to biological sex and protects people from discrimination because they are male or female.


A case study, showing this happening during the COVID-19 pandemic, can be found [here](#).

DISCUSSION:

Ask the learners about how employers might mitigate sex discrimination during recruitment. What measures could they take? For example, a 'blind sift' when job applications are received would remove all information related to sex, and other protected characteristics, that could lead to a biased or unfair decision being made.

Other topics you may want to cover:

- Explain that men and women must receive equal pay for equal work and explore how gender pay gap reporting aims to increase transparency.
- Include examples where men may face disadvantage (e.g. assumptions about childcare leave or entry to certain professions).

<p> Sexual Orientation</p> <p>Definition: Sexual orientation refers to a person's romantic or sexual attraction to others.</p> <p>How might this look? Discrimination might include refusing someone a job because of their sexual orientation, subjecting them to homophobic comments or harassment, or creating policies that disadvantage same-sex couples.</p>	<p>This slide covers discrimination because of someone's sexual orientation. These are just some examples of how a person might be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation. This includes being heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: Help learners understand that making assumptions about someone's sexual orientation and treating them unfairly as a result is also protected.</p> <p>For example, if someone is assumed to be gay (perhaps because of stereotypes) and treated unfairly in the workplace, they would be protected from sexual orientation discrimination, whether they are actually gay or not.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask learners for other ways discrimination might occur, such as exclusion from social events, homophobic comments, or policies that disadvantage same-sex couples. <p>The first 3 minutes of this video from Usdaw looks at both sexual orientation and sexual harassment. You could use this to start a guided class discussion about these issues in the workplace.</p>
<p>Learning Intentions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning about the creation of the Equality Act (2010). • I am learning about the nine protected characteristics. • I am learning about types of discrimination found in the workplace. <p>Success Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can describe the purpose of the Equality Act (2010). • I can identify and describe the nine protected characteristics. • I can name and understand different types of workplace discrimination. 	<p>Revisit the Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for Lesson 1.</p>

Please note: this resource was developed in collaboration with Business Management teaching staff and reviewed by an employment lawyer ahead of publication. The information in this resource pack comes from several published sources, including [ACAS](#), [EHRC](#), and employment law firms' webpages. We recommend that teachers remain up to date with the latest information when teaching about employment law. This resource will be reviewed and updated to align with developments in employment law.

Current Edition: V1 (2025)

Further LGBT Inclusive Education teaching resources:

- tie.scot/resources
- lgbteducation.scot/resources