

Policy document

aat

# Health and Disability

# Health

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# Health

## Introduction

AAT expects its *members* to act with the highest levels of professionalism, both in and outside of their professional lives. Clients and employers rely on AAT to take ongoing steps to consider whether a *member* is, and continues to be, a *fit and proper* person to be a *member*. This policy and guidance is intended to support the AAT in meeting that obligation.

## The Association of Accounting Technicians

1. The Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) upholds high standards of competence and professional conduct. Accountancy is a trusted and respected profession and AAT aims to ensure that *members*:
  - a) behave professionally and ethically
  - b) comply with *AAT Regulations* and relevant legislation
  - c) keep their skills and competence up to date.
2. In pursuit of that aim, AAT investigates *complaints* and *misconduct* allegations against AAT *members* and approved training providers. Depending on the circumstances, AAT may resolve these *complaints* informally or take disciplinary action.

## The compliance framework and procedures of AAT

3. AAT endeavours to ensure that all *applicants* and *members* are treated fairly and consistently in accordance with the compliance framework agreed by the *Council* so that users of *members'* services are protected and that the reputation of the profession is maintained. In developing its policies AAT has had regard to the principles of good regulation:
  - a) Proportionality
  - b) Accountability
  - c) Consistency
  - d) Transparency
  - e) Targeting
4. The compliance framework of AAT is governed by the AAT *Articles of Association* and sets out the following *Regulations* and guidance with which all *members* must comply:
  - a) *Code of Professional Ethics*
  - b) *AAT Regulations 2016*
  - c) *Disciplinary Regulations*
  - d) *Licensing Regulations*

5. The *Regulations* and guidance are underpinned by publications covering specific areas of compliance policy and related procedures which include (as well as this policy):
  - a) *Insolvency policy*
  - b) *Criminal Convictions policy*
  - c) *Civil Sanctions policy*
  - d) *Disciplinary Sanctions policy*
  - e) *Investigation of Complaints and Referrals policy*
  - f) *Disclosure policy*
  - g) *Indicative Sanctions Guidance*
  - h) *Appeals Regulations*
  - i) *Witness Care and Expenses policy*
6. These publications explain the processes by which our compliance policy is put into practice. All *members* and *applicants* for membership must be aware of and follow this guidance. Further information on the compliance framework is available at [aat.org.uk](http://aat.org.uk) including the purpose of each publication and how they relate to each other.
7. The website is the definitive guide to all policies currently in force.
8. In this policy all words and phrases in italics, save titles of publications, shall have the meaning set out in the *AAT Glossary*.

## **Policy detail**

### **Health of *members* and professional misconduct**

9. AAT is committed to encouraging a diverse profession which it believes is best suited to serve a diverse society. This includes ensuring that disabled people (defined in the *Equality Act 2010* as those who have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities) are not substantially disadvantaged in their access to AAT services or discriminated against in respect of professional conduct issues.
10. However, it may nonetheless on occasion be appropriate for AAT to take action on *complaints* concerning the health of *members* where their conduct or competence causes a risk to the public or to the reputation of AAT and its membership. AAT reminds all *members* that where they have reason to think that their ability (or the ability of another *member* of AAT) to provide *accountancy services* of an acceptable standard, or to comply with the *Code of Professional Ethics* and other standards set by AAT is compromised by their health, they should report this to AAT as soon as reasonably possible.
11. Wherever AAT is dealing with the public or *members* or *applicants* who have a disability, AAT will take reasonable steps to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in comparison to people who are not disabled. Whether AAT is administering the membership, or dealing with a *complaint* against, a disabled *member*, or dealing with *applications* from a disabled person, it will endeavour to ensure that all parties are dealt with fairly and appropriately.
12. This may mean that AAT will in some instances treat disabled *members* or *applicants* more favourably than those who are not disabled. This is lawful in the context of disability legislation.

13. When AAT is conducting its regulatory functions, it is exercising a public function and has therefore a duty to make reasonable adjustments. This applies to any *investigation* work or disciplinary or other action that AAT takes against *members*.

### **What AAT can do to help?**

14. Whilst AAT will consider each request for reasonable adjustments individually, there are some common adjustments which AAT will offer as a matter of course and some other adjustments that AAT can make particular arrangements to provide.
15. AAT does not make assumptions about whether a disabled person requires any adjustments or about what those adjustments should be. In any situation where it appears reasonable adjustments may be necessary, AAT will contact the person concerned and seek to reach agreement on what may be reasonable in the circumstances.

### **What is reasonable?**

16. This is not defined in the *Equality Act* but AAT will take into account the following factors:
- a) Will the adjustment help in overcoming the difficulty that the disabled person may have?
  - b) How practical is it to provide the adjustment? For instance it may not be practical for an AAT caseworker based in London to visit a disabled person in the Shetland Isles, but AAT may be able to arrange for an agent to carry out the visit.
  - c) What are the resource implications of making the adjustment?
  - d) Would the adjustment cause disruption to others? For example, it would not usually be reasonable for a case owner to drop all other cases and devote all their time to one person, as others would inevitably suffer. The amount of extra time provided must therefore be “reasonable” in all the circumstances.

### **Requesting a reasonable adjustment**

17. AAT will let people know that we can provide reasonable adjustments, for example, in the following ways:
- a) by including a paragraph in written communications (e.g. acknowledgement letters)
  - b) by asking whether an adjustment might be required over the telephone
  - c) by including a note in published documents indicating that AAT can provide the document in an alternative format on request
  - d) by publishing this policy on our website
  - e) by working with key representative groups and others to raise awareness of this policy.

### **AAT’s equality duty**

18. In addition to the duties AAT owes to individual disabled people, we also have a wider duty to actively promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. AAT’s equality duty also applies to other characteristics protected by the *Equality Act*.
19. One of the ways AAT is working towards meeting our disability equality duty is by reviewing policies and practices to identify possible barriers for disabled people so that we can minimise those barriers and anticipate the reasonable adjustments that we may need to make.

## **Monitoring**

20. AAT will record and monitor the reasonable adjustments that have been requested and made. This will allow a review of the services AAT provides and help identify whether there are any wider steps that can be taken to improve AAT's services.

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