Transgender Inclusion and Participation Policy

Version: V1 (Operational - Subject to Board Ratification)
Operational Effective Date: 1st September 2026
Review Date: September 2027, or sooner if required

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1. Purpose

Taekwondo Council UK (TCUK) is committed to providing a welcoming, respectful and inclusive environment in which people can participate in Taekwon-Do.

In England, Scotland and Wales, TCUK recognises gender reassignment and sex as protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. In Northern Ireland, equivalent protections arise under separate Northern Ireland equality legislation; section 24 applies.

This policy sets out TCUK's approach to transgender participation across:

- training;
- specific single-sex classes;
- changing and toilet facilities;
- gradings; and
- competitions.

TCUK aims to enable participation wherever reasonably possible while also protecting participant safety, dignity, safeguarding, fair competition and the integrity of Taekwon-Do.

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2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Taekwondo Council UK;
- TCUK member organisations;
- affiliated clubs;
- instructors and coaches;
- officials and umpires;
- volunteers;
- students and competitors; and
- TCUK-sanctioned events and competitions.

Where an event is operated under the rules of another organisation, sanctioning body or international federation, additional eligibility rules may apply (see section 18).

Territorial application

TCUK operates across the United Kingdom. Equality law differs between Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

- In **England, Scotland and Wales**, this policy is made under, and must be applied in accordance with, the Equality Act 2010 and the EHRC Code of Practice for Services, Public Functions and Associations (2026).
- In **Northern Ireland**, the Equality Act 2010 does not generally apply. Equality law there is contained in separate Northern Ireland legislation and is affected by the Windsor Framework. Section 24 explains how this policy applies in Northern Ireland.

3. Definitions

In this policy:

- **Sex** means whether a person is male or female. Following the UK Supreme Court judgment in For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC 16, "sex", "man" and "woman" in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex. References in this policy to "biological sex", "biologically male" and "biologically female" have that meaning. A Gender Recognition Certificate does not change a person's sex for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.
- **Gender reassignment** is the protected characteristic in section 7 of the Equality Act 2010. It covers a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their sex. No medical treatment is required, and protection applies at any stage.
- **Transgender (trans) person** means a person whose gender identity differs from their sex. This may include people who describe themselves as non-binary.
- **Gender-affected activity** has the meaning in section 195(3) of the Equality Act 2010: a sport, game or other competitive activity in which the physical strength, stamina or physique of average persons of one sex would put them at a disadvantage compared to average persons of the other sex as competitors.
- **Single-sex or separate-sex service** means a class, activity or facility provided to one sex only, or separately to each sex, as permitted by Schedule 3, paragraphs 26 and 27 of the Equality Act 2010.
- **TCUK-sanctioned event** means any competition, grading, course or seminar organised, licensed or approved by TCUK.

4. General Principles

TCUK will:

- treat all participants with dignity and respect;
- welcome transgender participants into Taekwon-Do;
- not exclude somebody from general membership, training or grading simply because they are transgender;
- promote inclusive participation wherever reasonably possible;
- protect the safety, privacy and welfare of all participants;
- ensure competitive categories remain safe, fair and appropriate;
- recognise that there may be circumstances where genuinely single-sex provision is lawful and appropriate;
- respect privacy and confidentiality;
- make and record decisions under this policy on a consistent, evidence-based and proportionate basis; and
- comply with applicable legislation and statutory guidance in each part of the UK.

Bullying, harassment, victimisation or discriminatory abuse towards any participant will not be tolerated.

TRAINING

5. General Club Training

Transgender participants are welcome to train within TCUK clubs and member organisations.

Students should ordinarily be:

- addressed by their chosen name;
- addressed using their requested pronouns; and
- included in general training activities in the same way as other students.

General Taekwon-Do classes do not need to be separated by biological sex unless there is a specific and lawful safety, safeguarding or practical reason for doing so.

TCUK policy is that a person must not be refused membership of, or access to, general training simply because they are transgender. In England, Scotland and Wales, less favourable treatment because of gender reassignment may amount to unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. In Northern Ireland, the applicable protections arise under separate Northern Ireland equality legislation; section 24 applies.

Mixed training may include:

- patterns;
- fundamental movements;
- pad work;
- fitness activities;
- partner drills;
- self-defence;
- destruction practice; and
- sparring practice.

6. Sparring During Training

Students of different sexes may train and spar with each other during normal classes. This includes transgender participants.

Training sparring is different from competitive sparring because it takes place within a controlled teaching and development environment rather than for the purpose of determining a competitive result. The competition provisions of the Equality Act 2010 (section 195) do not apply to it.

Mixed-sex sparring during training is therefore permitted provided instructors comply with all relevant TCUK policies and safety requirements. This includes, where applicable:

- the **Safe Practice, Supervision & Student Ratios Policy**;
- safeguarding policies and procedures;
- appropriate instructor supervision;
- appropriate protective equipment;
- appropriate levels of contact;
- matching participants appropriately according to factors such as age, size, weight, experience, grade and ability; and
- adapting or stopping an activity where an instructor considers that continuing would present an unacceptable risk.

The instructor retains responsibility for determining whether a particular training pairing is appropriate and safe. No student should be required to spar with another participant where the instructor considers the pairing unsuitable.

Partner requests. A student may ask not to be paired with a particular partner, or with a partner of the opposite sex, for reasons such as religion or belief, personal comfort, past experience or safety. Instructors should accommodate such requests discreetly, without disclosing or drawing attention to any other student's personal information. Such requests must never be used to single out, exclude or humiliate an individual.

7. Single-Sex and Targeted Classes

TCUK recognises that there may be circumstances where a club or instructor wishes to provide a genuinely single-sex class or activity. Examples may include:

- women-only self-defence courses;
- targeted programmes intended to encourage women who may not feel comfortable participating in a mixed-sex environment;
- sessions involving significant physical contact;
- activities designed around the safety, privacy or dignity needs of a particular sex; or
- programmes intended for participants who may have experienced domestic abuse, sexual violence or other circumstances where the presence of the opposite sex could significantly affect their willingness or ability to participate.

Legal basis - England, Scotland and Wales

In England, Scotland and Wales, Schedule 3, paragraphs 26 and 27 of the Equality Act 2010 permit separate-sex and single-sex services where the statutory conditions are met and providing the service in that way is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Where those conditions are met, the class may be restricted according to biological sex. Northern Ireland is dealt with separately in section 24.

For example, a women-only self-defence course specifically established to provide a safe and supportive environment for women may restrict attendance to biological females where this is lawful, justified and proportionate.

Where a class is genuinely provided as a biological female-only service, allowing biological males to participate would mean that the class was no longer operating as a biological female-only class. Likewise, where a genuine biological male-only service is provided, eligibility may be restricted to biological males where that restriction is lawful and proportionate.

A trans man (who is biologically female) is not excluded from a women-only class by reason of sex. He may be excluded only where this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim (Schedule 3, paragraph 28). Any such decision must be made case by case.

Conditions for running a single-sex class

The purpose of a restriction must be connected to the nature and objectives of the particular class. It must not be used as a general means of excluding transgender people from ordinary Taekwon-Do participation. Where a club operates a specific single-sex class:

- the reason for making the class single-sex should be clear and recorded in writing;

- the arrangement should have a genuine purpose relating to matters such as safety, privacy, dignity, participation or the effectiveness of the service;
- the restriction should be proportionate to that purpose;
- the needs and dignity of people who may be unable to attend should also be considered;
- the decision should be kept under review and the written record provided to TCUK on request; and
- where reasonably practicable, ordinary mixed classes or alternative opportunities should remain available.

Positive action

Programmes intended to increase participation by an under-represented group, such as women and girls, can often be delivered as **positive action** under section 158 of the Equality Act 2010. This involves targeted promotion and support without restricting who may attend. Clubs should consider whether an open but targeted programme would achieve their aim before restricting a class to one sex.

Any question regarding access to a single-sex class should be handled sensitively, privately and in accordance with current law and TCUK policy.

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8. Changing Rooms, Toilets and Showers

In England, Scotland and Wales, where changing rooms, toilets or showers at a TCUK-sanctioned event are lawfully provided as separate-sex facilities, their use will be based on biological sex in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the EHRC Code of Practice. Any additional restriction on a trans person's use of a facility for their biological sex must itself be lawful, justified and proportionate. Where facilities are controlled by a club, the club should apply the same principles. Northern Ireland is dealt with separately in section 24.

Where reasonably practicable, a private, lockable or mixed-sex alternative (for example, a single-occupancy room) should be made available so that participants have an appropriate option.

Where a venue does not have the physical infrastructure to provide an additional private or single-occupancy changing facility, organisers should consider proportionate practical alternatives. These may include advising participants to arrive and leave the venue already changed into their dobok, or arranging private use of another suitable room where available. The absence of an additional facility does not of itself convert a lawful single-sex changing facility into a mixed-sex facility.

Where facilities are controlled by a venue operator, clubs and event organisers should follow the venue's arrangements and raise any concerns with the venue.

Nobody should be challenged, questioned or asked to prove their sex in or around a facility. Concerns should be raised privately with the instructor or event organiser. Arrangements for children must also comply with TCUK's safeguarding policies.

GRADING

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9. Grading Participation

Transgender status does not affect a student's eligibility to grade.

Gradings assess whether the student has demonstrated the technical knowledge, physical ability, attitude and competence required by the relevant Taekwon-Do syllabus. Male, female and transgender students may therefore train and grade together.

Candidates will be assessed against the requirements appropriate to their:

- grade;
- age where relevant;
- syllabus; and
- any reasonable adjustments which apply.

A student's gender identity or transgender status must not result in a different technical grading standard being applied.

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10. Sparring and Partner Work During Gradings

Where sparring, self-defence or partner work forms part of a grading, participants may work with students of any sex. As with normal training, the grading examiner or instructor must ensure that pairings are appropriate and that all relevant TCUK safety, safeguarding and supervision policies are followed. Partner requests should be handled as described in section 6.

Factors including age, size, weight, grade, experience, ability and safety should be considered when selecting partners.

Grading sparring is an assessment activity and is not treated as a sex-specific competitive sporting category.

COMPETITION

11. General Competition Principle and Legal Basis

TCUK distinguishes between disciplines where biological sex does not materially affect the competitive result or participant safety and disciplines where it may. TCUK competitions will therefore use different category structures depending upon the discipline.

Section 195 of the Equality Act 2010 allows a sports body, in relation to a gender-affected activity:

- to separate competitors by sex (section 195(1)); and
- to restrict the participation of transgender people where necessary to secure fair competition or the safety of competitors (section 195(2)).

For young people, account must be taken of the age and stage of development of the children likely to compete (section 195(4)).

For England, Scotland and Wales, TCUK has assessed that competitive sparring and competitive destruction are gender-affected activities for adults and for young people where age and stage of development mean that sex-based differences in strength, stamina or physique are material. This assessment reflects the contact, power and safety considerations inherent in sparring and the strength and power considerations inherent in destruction. TCUK will keep the assessment and its supporting evidence under review. Northern Ireland is dealt with separately in section 24.

12. Non-Contact Competition

Where a competition discipline does not involve physical contact between competitors and biological sex does not materially affect participant safety or the competitive outcome, TCUK will operate **mixed categories**. This includes individual patterns and team patterns.

Competitors will instead be divided according to appropriate criteria such as age, grade or experience. A competitor's biological sex or gender identity will not determine their category within a mixed non-contact discipline.

Other technical disciplines, including special technique (high and flying techniques), will have their category structure specified in the current TCUK Competition Rules. Before setting or changing the category structure, TCUK will record an assessment of whether differences in physical strength, stamina or physique materially affect competitive fairness or safety. The assessment will be reviewed as part of the annual Competition Rules review and whenever material new evidence or guidance becomes available.

13. Competitive Sparring

Competitive sparring differs from training sparring because participants compete directly against each other. The outcome can be affected by physical characteristics including strength, power, speed, stamina and physique. These differences are also relevant to competitor safety.

Where TCUK competitive sparring categories are separated by sex, competitors will participate according to their **biological sex**. Accordingly:

- competitors who are biologically female will compete within the female sparring division; and
- competitors who are biologically male will compete within the male sparring division.

Gender identity will not determine eligibility for a sex-specific competitive sparring category. This applies whether or not a competitor holds a Gender Recognition Certificate, and applies equally to competitors who describe themselves as non-binary.

Junior competitors. In accordance with section 195(4) of the Equality Act 2010, TCUK will take account of the age and stage of development of children when determining whether competitive sparring is gender-affected. The TCUK Competition Rules will specify the age or competition division from which sparring categories are separated by biological sex. Below that threshold, mixed categories may be operated using appropriate divisions including age, weight, height, grade and experience. The threshold will be supported by a documented safety and fairness assessment and reviewed periodically.

This provision relates specifically to competition. It does not prevent participants of different sexes from training or practising sparring together within clubs or during gradings.

14. Competitive Destruction

TCUK recognises that biological differences in physical strength, power and physique may materially affect the outcome of destruction competition. TCUK destruction categories will therefore be separated by biological sex where sex can materially affect competitive fairness or safety. Where male and female destruction categories are operated:

- competitors who are biologically female will compete within the female category; and
- competitors who are biologically male will compete within the male category.

Gender identity will not determine eligibility for a sex-specific competitive destruction category. For children, TCUK will apply the same age-and-stage-of-development approach described in section 13 and will record the safety and fairness basis for any sex-separated junior destruction categories.

This does not prevent students of different sexes practising destruction together during normal training or being assessed together during gradings.

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15. Other Competition Disciplines

Where TCUK introduces or sanctions additional competition disciplines, TCUK will consider whether biological sex materially affects:

- participant safety;
- strength or power;
- physical advantage;
- competitive fairness; or
- the integrity of the competition.

Where these considerations are not materially affected, TCUK will seek to operate mixed categories. Where biological sex materially affects safety or competitive fairness, TCUK may operate sex-specific categories based upon biological sex. TCUK will record the decision and the reasons for it.

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16. Declaration of Sex and Eligibility Checks

Competitors entering a sex-separated category will be asked to state their sex on the entry form. By entering, the competitor (or, for a child, their parent or carer) confirms that the information is accurate. TCUK will ordinarily rely on that declaration.

Where there is a genuine and reasonable doubt about eligibility, TCUK may privately ask for further information. TCUK will request only the minimum information needed. It will not require any physical examination or genetic testing, and any decision can be reviewed under section 23.

Knowingly giving false information about eligibility may be dealt with under TCUK's disciplinary procedures.

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17. Anti-Doping

Where a TCUK event operates under anti-doping rules, including UK Anti-Doping rules, those rules apply to all competitors. Some medications that may be used as part of gender reassignment, including testosterone, are prohibited substances under the World Anti-Doping Code. Competitors using such medication should seek advice and, where required, obtain a Therapeutic Use Exemption before competing. Enquiries will be handled confidentially.

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18. Events Operated Under Other Rules

Where TCUK sanctions an event operated under the rules of the International Taekwondo Council or another organisation, that organisation's eligibility rules may also apply. TCUK will not sanction an event in the UK that would be operated in a way that breaches the equality law applying where it takes place.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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19. Children and Young People

TCUK recognises that additional care is required when working with children and young people. When organising training, grading or competition, consideration must be given to factors including:

- age;
- size;
- physical development;
- grade;
- experience;
- ability;
- safeguarding; and
- the nature and level of physical contact involved.

The welfare and safety of the child must remain paramount.

Decisions about a child's participation should involve the child and, where appropriate and consistent with safeguarding, their parents or carers, together with the club Welfare Officer or relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead, in line with TCUK's Safeguarding Policy.

Information concerning a child's transgender status must be handled sensitively and only shared where there is a legitimate need to do so.

PRIVACY AND RESPECT

20. Privacy, Confidentiality and Data Protection

A person's transgender status is private information. Clubs, instructors, officials and competition organisers must not disclose it more widely than reasonably necessary.

Where participation or eligibility needs to be discussed, this should take place privately and involve only those individuals who need the information in order to make or administer the decision.

Information about a person's transgender status or medical treatment may be special category personal data under the UK GDPR. It will be handled in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and TCUK's data protection policy: collected only where necessary, stored securely, accessed only by those who need it, and kept no longer than necessary.

Under section 22 of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, it can be a **criminal offence** for a person who obtains information in an official capacity to disclose that someone has applied for, or holds, a Gender Recognition Certificate. TCUK officers, officials and volunteers must bear this in mind.

TCUK will seek only the minimum information reasonably necessary and will not require intrusive physical examinations for the purpose of establishing competition or participation eligibility.

21. Respectful Conduct

All participants, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators are expected to behave respectfully. Questions or disagreements regarding participation or competition eligibility do not justify:

- bullying;
- harassment;
- humiliation;
- abusive comments;
- discriminatory behaviour; or
- inappropriate disclosure of personal information.

People hold a range of beliefs about sex and gender identity. In England, Scotland and Wales, some such beliefs may be protected under the Equality Act 2010; in Northern Ireland, different equality legislation applies. Holding or respectfully expressing a lawful belief is not in itself a breach of this policy. However, no belief may be expressed in a way that amounts to harassment, bullying or unlawful discrimination towards any individual.

Nobody will be treated less favourably for raising a question, concern or complaint under this policy in good faith.

Any question regarding a participant's eligibility should be raised privately with the instructor, competition organiser or appropriate TCUK representative. Eligibility must not be debated publicly around the individual concerned.

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

22. Competition Eligibility Enquiries

Where a competitor, club or organisation is unsure which competition category applies, they should contact TCUK before entering the event wherever possible. TCUK will handle eligibility enquiries sensitively and confidentially.

In determining the appropriate category, TCUK may consider:

- the competition discipline;
- whether the discipline involves direct physical contact;
- whether biological sex can materially affect the competitive result;
- participant safety;
- age and development where relevant;
- weight and other competition categories;
- the rules of the particular event; and
- the legislation and statutory guidance applying in the relevant part of the UK.

23. Review of Decisions

A participant affected by an eligibility or participation decision may ask TCUK to review that decision. Where reasonably possible, the review should involve somebody who was not responsible for the original decision.

Any review will be handled privately and respectfully. A participant who remains dissatisfied may use the TCUK Complaints Procedure.

Expedited competition eligibility review

Where an eligibility decision affects participation in an event due to take place within seven days, the participant may request an expedited review.

The CEO, or the Chair where the CEO was involved in the original decision, will appoint a three-person Eligibility Review Panel. Panel members must not have been responsible for the original decision and must declare any material conflict of interest.

The Panel will use reasonable endeavours to issue an interim, event-specific determination within 48 hours of receiving the information reasonably required to determine the matter. Where that is not reasonably possible, the participant will be informed promptly and the review will be completed as soon as practicable.

The interim determination will govern eligibility for the relevant event pending completion of any wider review or complaint. It does not remove the participant's right to use the TCUK Complaints Procedure or any rights available under applicable law.

NORTHERN IRELAND

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24. Application in Northern Ireland

The Equality Act 2010 does not generally apply in Northern Ireland. Discrimination because of sex and gender reassignment is governed there principally by the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended) and related legislation. Article 45 of that Order contains a specific exception for sex-separated competitive sport where the physical strength, stamina or physique of the average woman puts her at a disadvantage to the average man. For gender reassignment discrimination, Article 45(2) requires the restriction to be necessary to secure fair competition or the safety of competitors. Article 2 of the Windsor Framework may also affect the interpretation of Northern Ireland equality law.

At the date of this policy, the effect in Northern Ireland of the Supreme Court judgment in For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC 16 has not been finally settled. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has applied to the High Court for an advisory declaration, and a leave hearing is scheduled for December 2026. TCUK will keep this position under review and will have regard to updated guidance from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland.

Accordingly, for any TCUK activity in Northern Ireland:

- the provisions on general training, sparring in training, gradings, non-contact competition, children, privacy and respectful conduct apply in full;
- the provisions that restrict participation by biological sex (sections 7, 8, 13, 14 and 15) will be applied only after TCUK has taken legal advice on Northern Ireland law as it then stands, and the decision will be recorded; and
- TCUK will have regard to guidance from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland.

TCUK will update this section once the legal position in Northern Ireland is clarified.

POLICY POSITION

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25. Summary of TCUK's Position

Area	Position
General training	Transgender participants are welcome to participate fully. Male, female and transgender students may train, work with partners and spar together, subject to normal safety, safeguarding and supervision requirements, including the TCUK Safe Practice, Supervision & Student Ratios Policy.
Specific single-sex classes	Where a programme has been genuinely established as a single-sex service for a lawful and proportionate reason (for example, a women-only self-defence course), participation may be determined by biological sex.
Changing and toilet facilities	In England, Scotland and Wales, separate-sex facilities are based on biological sex. A private or mixed-sex alternative should be offered where reasonably practicable; where the venue cannot provide one, proportionate practical alternatives such as arriving pre-changed should be considered. Northern Ireland is governed by section 24.
Gradings	Transgender participants may grade in the same way as any other student. Mixed-sex partner work and sparring may take place where appropriately supervised.

Non-contact competition	Individual and team patterns are mixed. Other technical disciplines, including special technique, are set in the current Competition Rules following a recorded fairness and safety assessment.
Competitive sparring	Where divided into male and female categories, eligibility is determined by biological sex because biological differences may materially affect fairness and safety. Junior thresholds are set in the Competition Rules after considering age and stage of development.
Competitive destruction	Where divided into male and female categories, eligibility is determined by biological sex because strength, power and physique may materially affect results.
Northern Ireland	Sex-based restrictions are applied only after legal advice on Northern Ireland law (section 24).

TCUK seeks to provide an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and has the opportunity to participate in Taekwon-Do, while recognising its responsibility to maintain safe, fair and appropriate sporting environments.

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26. Legal Framework and Review

This policy is informed by:

- the **Equality Act 2010**, in particular sections 7 (gender reassignment), 11 (sex), 26 (harassment), 27 (victimisation), 29 (services), 101 (associations), 158 (positive action), 195 (sport), 212 (interpretation), Schedule 3 paragraphs 26 to 28 (separate and single-sex services), and Schedule 16 (associations);
- **For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC 16**;
- the **EHRC Code of Practice for Services, Public Functions and Associations (2026)**, a statutory code in force from 5 August 2026;
- the **Gender Recognition Act 2004**, including section 22 (prohibition on disclosure);
- the **UK GDPR** and **Data Protection Act 2018**;
- in Northern Ireland, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended), including Article 45 (sport), together with Article 2 of the Windsor Framework;
- guidance issued by the home nations sports councils (Sport England, sportscotland, Sport Wales and Sport Northern Ireland).

TCUK will review this policy annually, or sooner where there is a relevant change to UK legislation, case law (including any Northern Ireland ruling on the effect of For Women Scotland), statutory guidance, sports council guidance or TCUK Competition Rules.

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27. Related Policies

- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Safe Practice, Supervision & Student Ratios Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Procedure and Disciplinary Procedures
- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice
- Anti-Doping Policy
- TCUK Competition Rules

Jurisdiction Note

This policy is intended to operate across all four home nations. England, Scotland and Wales share the Equality Act 2010 framework. Northern Ireland has a separate equality-law framework and the Northern Ireland provisions in section 24 take precedence where a different legal approach is required.

Approval

Policy Owner: Board of Directors, Taekwondo Council UK
Lead Officer: Chief Executive Officer
Approved operationally by: TCUK CEO
Date: 1st September 2026
Operational Effective Date: 1st September 2026
Subject to formal Board ratification at the next Board meeting
Next Review Date: September 2027, or sooner if required