

POL-QA-01 Access and Equity Policy

GOVERNANCE

SRTOs 5.2 - Prior to enrolment or the commencement of training and assessment, whichever comes first, the RTO provides, in print or through referral to an electronic copy, current and accurate information that enables the learner to make informed decisions about undertaking training with the RTO.

National Code 2018 - Standard 6 — Overseas Student Support Services

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a frame of reference in providing and maintaining training services that reflect fair and equal opportunity for all clients (past, current, and prospective students) regardless of their diversity; allowing everyone to freely participate in the learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and vilification.

DEFINITIONS

Access and equity mean policies and approaches aimed at ensuring that VET is responsive to the individual needs of clients whose age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability, sexuality, language skills, literacy or numeracy level, unemployment, imprisonment, or remote location may present a barrier to access, participation, and the achievement of suitable outcomes.

Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others due to the person's circumstances, characteristics, or beliefs.

a) **Direct Discrimination**

Direct discrimination takes place when a person, organisation or group of persons is treated less fairly than others based on stereotyped beliefs or views.

b) **Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination includes rules, practices, or policies which appear to be non-discriminatory and equally applicable, but operate in such a way that certain groups of people are excluded without just cause.

Workplace Harassment is any behaviour which is unwelcome, offends, humiliates, or intimidates a person and causes the work environment to become unpleasant. If a person is being harassed, then their ability to do their work is affected as they often become stressed and suffer health problems. Harassment may result from behaviour, which is not intended to offend or harm, such as jokes or unwanted attention however, this does not mean that it is lawful.

Sexual Harassment, the most common form of harassment, includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Unwanted touching
- b) Sexual innuendo propositions
- c) Nude pin-ups and posters
- d) Obscene telephone calls
- e) Wolf whistles

Sexual harassment can occur among peers or co-workers, and in subordinate-supervisor, supervisor-subordinate or staff-student, student-staff, student-student situations.

Verbal Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Sexual comments, advances, or propositions
- b) Lewd jokes or innuendos
- c) Racist comments or jokes
- d) Spreading rumours
- e) Comments or jokes about a person's disability, pregnancy, sexuality, age, or religion
- f) Repeated questions about one's personal life
- g) Belittling someone's work or contribution in a meeting
- h) Threats, insults, or abuse
- i) Offensive obscene language
- j) Obscene telephone calls, unsolicited letters, faxes, emails, and SMS messages

Non-Verbal Harassment includes, but are not limited to:

- a) Leering (e.g., staring at a woman's breasts)
- b) Putting offensive material on notice boards, computer screen savers, emails, and SMS messages
- c) Wolf whistling
- d) Nude or pornographic posters
- e) Displaying sexist or racist cartoons, or literature
- f) Demoting, failing to promote, or transferring someone because they refuse requests for sexual favours
- g) Following someone home from work
- h) Standing very close to someone or unnecessarily leaning over them
- i) Mimicking someone with a disability
- j) Practical jokes that are unwelcome
- k) Ignoring someone, or being cold and distant to them
- l) Crude hand or body gestures

Physical Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Unwelcome physical contact such as kissing, hugging, pinching, patting, touching, or brushing up against a person
- b) Indecent or sexual assault or attempted assault
- c) Hitting, pushing, shoving, spitting, or throwing objects at a person
- d) Unfastening a person's attire

POLICY STATEMENT

Ironwood Institute is committed to providing quality training and assessment products and services.

Ironwood Institute promotes, encourages and values equity and diversity. Ironwood Institute will ensure services offered are provided in a fair and equitable manner to all clients, free from bias.

Ironwood Institute is committed to providing flexible learning and assessment options, allowing clients alternatives which recognize the diversity of their individual needs and circumstances aiding them in their learning goals.

Ironwood identifies and monitors areas for improvement. Ironwood Institute will ensure:

- a) all training and assessment policies and procedures incorporate access and equity principles

- b) all learners have equitable access to the benefits of training and assessment irrespective of their gender, age, race, religion, culture, linguistic background, marital status, geographic location, socio-economic background, disability, sexual orientation, family responsibility or political conviction
- c) all nominations and enrolments into training courses and programs will always be conducted in an ethical and responsible manner, ensuring fairness and compliance with Equal Opportunity legislation; and
- d) all learners/clients have equitable access to training resources, facilities, equipment, support services, information, training and assessment personnel, materials, assessment opportunities, training opportunities.
- e) all documentation from regarding complaints concerning Access and Equity matters are maintained in accordance with Records Management Policy. (See Records Management Policy)

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Ironwood Institute will not accept any form of discrimination and we will apply the following principles in support of access and equity:

Access and Equity Principles

- a) Ironwood Institute abides by access and equity principles.
- b) Ironwood Institute will respect a client's right to privacy, confidentiality and be sensitive to client needs.
- c) Ironwood Institute provides equal opportunity for all learners and is responsive to the individual needs of its clients, whole gender, pregnancy, race, marital status, sexuality, age, family/carer responsibilities, disability, transgender, political conviction, cultural or ethnic background, linguistic background, religious belief, geographic location, socio-economic background, employment/unemployment, imprisonment may present a barrier to access, participation, and achievement of suitable outcomes.
- e) At enrolment, clients will be asked to identify personal needs or circumstances that may exist and for which they may require additional support (See Enrolment Policy).
- f) Ironwood Institute will ensure that all staff, employees, and contractors have access to the information and support needed to prevent discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and violence, victimization, and vilification or to deal with it appropriately if it occurs.
- g) Ironwood Institute seeks to create a learning environment where all students are respected and can develop their full potential.
- h) All clients are given fair and reasonable opportunity to attend and complete training.
- i) All staff are given fair and reasonable opportunity to participate in relevant decision-making processes and the allocation of resources and services as required to fulfil their duties and responsibilities.
- j) Deficiencies will be investigated to determine whether a breach or policy deficiency exists. Should a discrepancy be proven, the impact of that breach or deficiency will be identified along with how the policy should be amended to eliminate the breach or deficiency in the future.
- k) All perceived deficiencies in the Access and Equity Policy are to be documented, assessed, and reviewed by the Director Ironwood Institute.
- l) Ironwood Institute will demonstrate its commitment by:
 - i. Selecting students according to a fair and non-discriminatory process
 - ii. Making its training relevant for a diverse student population
 - iii. Providing suitable access to facilities and resources
 - iv. Providing appropriate support services
 - v. Providing appropriate complaints procedures

- vi. Consulting with relevant industry groups
- vii. Raising staff, contractor, and student awareness of equity issues.

Equal Opportunity

Ironwood Institute is an equal opportunity company and does not discriminate against or favour target groups in either recruiting or training, unless prescribed by funding contracts.

Target Groups are defined as:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- People with a disability
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds
- People in transition and other special groups (i.e., people re-entering the workforce, long term unemployed, sole parents, people with literacy problems, and those who have been institutionalised)
- Women
- People from regionally isolated communities.

Special Needs/Considerations

- a) Clients intending to enrol for training with Ironwood Institute are requested prior to enrolment to advise Ironwood Institute if they have any disability, physical or other impairment which may adversely affect their ability to successfully undertake training and assessment.
- b) Clients are encouraged to discuss with Ironwood Institute any 'special needs' and/or 'reasonable adjustments' to the study environment which they consider are necessary or would assist them in the performance of their studies.
- c) Ironwood Institute, in collaboration with the Client, will assess the potential for the Client to successfully complete the training which may include flexible delivery options to optimise the ease and benefit of the Clients' learning. However, no compromise to the integrity of the assessment against competency will be allowed.
- d) Clients with a disability are required to have the ability to fulfil the core requirements of the units of competence to attain the relevant award. However, it is recognised that flexibility in arrangements may need to be implemented.

Language, Literacy and Numeracy

- Each Training Package sets a minimum requirement in language, literacy, and numeracy skills of learners, with which Ironwood Institute must abide.
- Ironwood Institute makes appropriate concessions for language, literacy, and numeracy issues of 'clients where these concessions do not compromise the requirements of the relevant Training Package and the integrity, equity, and fairness of assessment.
- Where a client is deemed, either prior to enrolment or throughout the training program, to possess a lower level of language, literacy or numeracy than is the minimum requirement for the requirements of the Training Package, Ironwood Institute will provide appropriate advice and support to the Client regarding further learning options. At times, further language or literacy development or remedial assistance may be required to be completed prior to the continuation or completion of the Client's course of study.

Harassment

- Harassment will not be tolerated at Ironwood Institute. If harassment occurs, the person responsible will be subject to disciplinary procedures. Disciplinary action will be taken against any staff or client

involved in such behaviour. This may include termination of employment and removal of the client from the training course.

- Serious cases of harassment may constitute a criminal offence.
- Ironwood Institute will not tolerate behaviour which is sexual harassment and expects all staff, contractors, and clients to treat each other with dignity and respect.

Bullying and Violence

- Ironwood Institute will not tolerate bullying or violent behaviour and expects all staff, contractors, and clients to treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Ironwood Institute recognises bullying, and violence demeans and infringes the rights of individuals and groups, damaging the work and learning environment.

Vilification

Ironwood Institute will not tolerate behaviour which vilifies another person and expects all staff, contractors, and clients to treat each other with dignity and respect.

Complaints

- a) Ironwood Institute encourages informal resolutions of discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and violence, victimization, and vilification grievances in the first instance, as close to the source as possible, with the option of conciliation or investigation of the complaint if necessary.
- b) Complaints will be investigated in a confidential manner and action will be taken to ensure that the discrimination/harassment stops. Appropriate warning or disciplinary action will be taken where harassment is found to have occurred.
- c) Those responsible for advising, conciliating, or investigating a complaint must act fairly and impartially, they must act without bias and avoid any conflict of interest the respondent must be given a fair opportunity to know the case against him or her and to be given the opportunity to make a considered response.
- d) All staff, clients and contractors involved with the Ironwood Institute complaint procedures will be treated with respect and courtesy. Enquiries and complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, equitable, fair, and confidential manner. All attempts will be made to deal with matters expeditiously while ensuring all parties are provided with enough time to prepare and or respond.
- e) Ironwood Institute acknowledges that it is of paramount importance and in the best interests of all parties that confidentiality is maintained during these procedures.
- f) Ironwood Institute encourages the reporting of behaviour that breaches equal opportunity policy but will not tolerate vexatious or frivolous complaints.

Victimisation

- a) For complaints to be brought forward, complainants must feel secure in the knowledge that the Ironwood Institutes procedures will be followed without fear of reprisal.
- b) Ironwood Institute will not victimise or treat any person unfairly for making a harassment complaint.
- c) Ironwood Institute will not tolerate behaviour of victimisation of another person and expects all staff, contractors, and clients to treat each other with dignity and respect.
- d) Any complaint of victimisation will be treated in the same manner as a complaint of discrimination, sexual harassment, or vilification.

OBLIGATIONS

Ironwood Institute has a legal and moral obligation to provide equal opportunity in an environment free from discrimination for staff, contractors, and clients to ensure that discrimination/harassment does not occur in the workplace.

Ironwood Institute will:

- Ensure that all staff and students are aware of and act according to this policy
- Ensure that complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the terms of the Complaints and Appeals Policy.
- Ensure that the confidentiality of all complaints is maintained.
- Maintain policies and procedures for equal opportunities for all staff, contractors, and students
- Disseminate policies and procedures to staff, contractors, and students
- Examine all policies and practices, as they affect staff, contractors, and students to ensure the elimination of discrimination and harassment
- Ensure that there is no discrimination against any individual student or group of students or staff, in access to facilities, products and services
- Educate staff and contractors on the general goals and philosophy of equal opportunity together with the rationale for policies and practices which are adopted
- Eliminate sexist and other discriminator language from all publications and discourage the use of such language in all printed material and in the speech of its staff, contractors, and students
- Establish and maintain mechanisms to deal with complaints.
- If the Director/Delegate feels that they are not the appropriate person to deal with the complaint, it will refer the matter to either another member of the management team or an external independent party for review and/or action.

Ironwood Institute staff, contractors, and students will

- Act to prevent harassment, discrimination, and victimization against others
- Respect differences among other staff, clients, and contractors, such as cultural and social diversity
- Treat people fairly, without discrimination, harassment, or victimization
- Respect the rights of others
- Respect people's rights to privacy and confidentiality
- Refuse to join in with these behaviours
- Supporting the person in saying no to these behaviours
- Acting as a witness if the person being harassed decides to lodge a complaint
- Observe site rules or behaviour guidelines set by Ironwood Institute Trainers/Assessors
- Behave in a manner that does not interfere with the learning of others; and
- Conduct themselves in a responsible manner while in training
- Ensure the rights of all clients to have their say, balanced with the responsibility to listen to others and allow others to have their say.

If an Ironwood Institute staff member, contractor or client feels harassed, bullied or otherwise a victim of unwelcome behaviour, the staff member, contractor, or client is encouraged to inform the person where the behaviour is unwanted, unacceptable and/or offensive. If the staff, contractor, or client feels unable to approach the person, or if the behaviour continues following their request that the behaviour cease, the Director Ironwood Institute should be contacted.

RESPONSIBILITIES

CEO/Delegate — for overall authority and responsibility

LEGISLATION

This policy reflects our commitment to the following legislation:

- a) National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (NVR Act) — Commonwealth
- b) Training and Skills Development Act 2008 (South Australia)
- c) Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Commonwealth)
- d) Disability Discrimination Act 2009 (Commonwealth)
- e) Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
- f) Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)
- g) Equal Opportunity Act 1994 (South Australia)