

Contents

Purpose	1
Scope.....	1
Standards and Legislative Basis	1
Definitions	1
Policy	2
Responsibilities.....	6
Procedures	7
Related Documents	9
Document Control.....	9

Purpose

This policy affirms Everest Institute of Education's (Ei) commitment to a learning and working environment that is safe, inclusive, equitable, respectful and culturally safe. It sets out Ei's commitments, responsibilities and procedures for promoting diversity, preventing unlawful and harmful conduct, supporting students and staff, and responding to concerns in a fair and timely manner.

This policy is designed to support compliance with the Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2025, including Standards 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 4.3 and 4.4, and with applicable Commonwealth and Victorian law.

Scope

This policy applies to prospective students, current students, graduates where a complaint or appeal relates to their student experience, staff, contractors, trainers, assessors, managers, volunteers, agents, third-party providers and visitors.

It applies to conduct in classrooms, online learning environments, assessments, work placement or other practical training environments, student support interactions, recruitment and enrolment activities, marketing, events, and any communication or conduct connected with Ei.

Standards and Legislative Basis

- Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2025
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (VIC)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (VIC), and other applicable vilification law
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Ei privacy requirements
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth) and National Code 2018, where Ei delivers courses to overseas students

Definitions

Diversity: the presence of people with different backgrounds, identities, life experiences, cultures, beliefs, abilities and circumstances.

Inclusion: active steps taken to ensure people feel respected, safe, welcomed, heard and able to participate on an equal basis.

Equity: fair and appropriate treatment that recognises different starting points and support needs.

Cultural safety: an environment that is spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically safe for people, where there is no challenge to identity, and where relationships are characterised by respect.

Reasonable adjustment: a measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as other students, provided the adjustment is appropriate and does not cause unjustifiable hardship or undermine the integrity of the training product.

Harassment: unwelcome behaviour that humiliates, intimidates, threatens, offends, degrades or creates a hostile environment.

Bullying: repeated unreasonable behaviour directed toward a person or group that creates a risk to health and safety.

Vilification: conduct that incites or encourages hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule against a person or group because of a protected attribute such as race or religion.

Victimisation: subjecting a person to detriment because they made, intend to make, support or are involved in a complaint, report, disclosure or appeal.

Antisemitism: a specific form of racism directed at Jewish people, people perceived to be Jewish, Jewish identity, Jewish ethnicity, Judaism, Jewish cultural expression or Jewish institutions.

Policy

Overview

Everest Institute of Education (EI) is committed to ensuring that:

- fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment for all VET students;
- fostering a culturally safe learning environment for First Nations people;
- applying fair, transparent and equitable enrolment, training, assessment and support practices;
- preventing discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification, victimisation, sexual harassment, racism, antisemitism and other harmful conduct;
- providing access to support services, trainers, assessors and other staff to support student progress;
- making reasonable adjustments where appropriate so students with disability can access and participate in training and assessment on an equal basis;
- identifying and supporting the wellbeing needs of the student cohort and individual students;
- ensuring complaints and appeals are accessible, procedurally fair, timely and used to inform continuous improvement;
- identifying, recording and managing risks affecting inclusion, cultural safety, student wellbeing and equal opportunity.

Diversity and Inclusion

EI values the individual differences, lived experiences and perspectives of students, staff and the wider community. Diversity is recognised as a strength that enriches learning, supports better engagement and improves educational outcomes.

Ei will promote diversity and inclusion by:

- providing welcoming, respectful and accessible learning and working environments;
- using inclusive and accurate information in marketing, recruitment and enrolment materials;
- considering the needs of different learner cohorts when planning delivery, support and communication;

- offering flexibility in the way training and assessment are delivered, where this does not compromise the requirements of the training product;
- promoting student voice, feedback and participation in decisions that affect the student experience;
- ensuring this policy also applies in online learning, practical training, work placement and third-party delivery environments.

First Nations Cultural Safety

EI recognises the distinct requirement under the Outcome Standards to foster a culturally safe learning environment for First Nations people. EI is committed to respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and communities.

EI will:

- take active steps to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feel safe, respected and able to participate fully in learning.
- use respectful and appropriate language and cultural references in communication and learning resources.
- consider cultural obligations, community responsibilities, ceremony and Sorry Business when planning attendance, support and assessment arrangements, where this can be accommodated without compromising the requirements of the training product.
- seek feedback, where practicable, from First Nations students and relevant community stakeholders to improve cultural safety and participation.
- respond promptly to culturally unsafe behaviour, racism or exclusion.

Inclusive Education and Learning Environment

EI will provide student-centred training and assessment practices that are accessible, relevant and responsive to diverse learner cohorts.

This includes:

- reviewing learning and assessment materials for accessibility, cultural relevance and inclusive language.
- ensuring students are informed how and when they can access trainers, assessors and other support staff.
- using delivery methods that are appropriate to the learner cohort, course requirements and mode of study.
- identifying and removing avoidable barriers to participation in classrooms, online systems, assessments and practical training environments.
- requiring third-party providers and placement partners delivering services on EI's behalf to comply with this policy and escalate any concerns to EI (where applicable).

Fairness, Equity and Access

EI will maintain open, fair, clear and transparent policies and procedures for enquiries, selection, enrolment, participation, support, assessment and completion.

EI will:

- publish course information, entry requirements and student support information in an accessible and transparent way.
- use pre-training review and other appropriate processes to assess student suitability, support needs and course fit.
- base enrolment and selection decisions on published criteria, course suitability and the student's circumstances, rather than assumptions or stereotypes.
- consider educational disadvantages, disability, caring responsibilities, language needs, cultural factors and other relevant barriers when determining appropriate support or adjustment.
- avoid blanket exclusions based on protected attributes or assumed capability.

Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying, Vilification and Victimisation

EI will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification, victimisation or other conduct that harms, intimidates, threatens, humiliates, excludes or degrades another person.

This protection applies to actual or perceived protected attributes, including age, disability, gender identity, industrial activity, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parent or carer status, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy and breastfeeding, race, religious belief or activity, sex, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, personal association with a person who has a protected attribute, and any other attribute protected by applicable law.

This policy applies to conduct in person, in writing, online, by phone, on social media where connected to EI, during placements or practical training, and in interactions involving staff, students, clients, contractors, third parties or visitors.

Retaliation or victimisation against a person who raises concern, supports another person, participates in an investigation or makes a complaint or appeal is prohibited.

Antisemitism and Other Race or Religion-Based Harm

EI recognises antisemitism as a specific form of racism. EI prohibits antisemitic discrimination, harassment, vilification, intimidation, stereotyping, exclusion and victimisation directed at Jewish people, people perceived to be Jewish, Jewish identity, Jewish ethnicity, Judaism, Jewish cultural expression or Jewish institutions.

Examples of prohibited conduct include:

- anti-Jewish slurs, mockery or stereotypes;
- Holocaust denial, trivialisation or demeaning comments used to target or intimidate people;
- graffiti, threats, property damage, online abuse or exclusion directed at Jewish students, staff or visitors;
- holding Jewish students or staff collectively responsible for the actions of any government, state, organisation or conflict;
- targeting a person's religious dress, observance, prayer, festivals or cultural expression because they are Jewish.

EI also prohibits Islamophobia and all other forms of racism, religious hatred and race or religion-based harassment or vilification. EI supports lawful, respectful academic discussion and criticism of governments or public issues; however, conduct becomes unacceptable when it targets people or groups with threats, intimidation, exclusion, demeaning stereotypes, harassment, vilification or victimisation.

Reasonable Adjustment and Disability Support

Students may disclose disability or other access needs if they wish to do so. EI will support disclosure in a respectful and private manner and will handle personal information in accordance with privacy obligations.

EI will:

- consult with the student to identify reasonable adjustments and support strategies.
- consider adjustments to materials, format, timing, equipment, communication methods, learning support, online access and assessment arrangements where appropriate.
- document agreed adjustments and review them as needed throughout the student's course.
- maintain the integrity of the training product and any genuine safety or inherent requirements while considering reasonable adjustment first.
- communicate reasons promptly where a requested adjustment is not appropriate or not possible.

Support Services and Wellbeing

EI will identify the support and wellbeing needs of its student cohort and individual students, taking account of the training products delivered, modes of delivery, placement environments and cohort characteristics.

Support and wellbeing services may include:

- language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) skills support.
- reasonable access to trainers, assessors and other staff, including clear contact points and response expectations.
- assistive technology, interpreters, note takers or other accessibility supports where appropriate;
- academic progress support, tutorials and learning support plans.
- referral to counselling, mental health, crisis, disability, health, legal, financial wellbeing, housing, family violence or community support services where appropriate.
- orientation and transition support for overseas students, including information about living and studying in Australia and available support services, where applicable.

Support services will be communicated to students at enrolment, orientation and throughout the course. Students who require additional support may have an Individual Support Plan or other documented support arrangement.

Religious and Cultural Inclusion

EI will take reasonable steps to support religious and cultural inclusion, including respectful consideration of prayer needs, holy days, fasting periods, cultural obligations, bereavement practices and significant community events. Requests for flexibility or support will be assessed individually, consistently and in a timely manner.

Reporting, Complaints and Appeals

All students, staff and other affected people have the right to raise concerns, provide feedback, report inappropriate conduct and make complaints or appeals without fear of victimisation.

EI will ensure that:

- information about reporting, complaints and appeals is easy to find and easy to understand.
- concerns can be raised through multiple channels, including in person, by telephone, by email and through other published methods.
- anonymous reporting options are available where possible, noting that anonymity may limit the action that can be taken.
- serious safety concerns are escalated immediately.
- complaints and appeals are managed confidentially, impartially and with procedural fairness.
- students may have a support person present in complaint or appeal processes.
- reasonable timeframes are set for acknowledgement, investigation, outcome notification and appeal actioning.
- independent review options are available for appeals, at no or low cost to the appellant where reasonably available.
- outcomes are documented, communicated and used to improve systems, training, support and culture.

Privacy and Confidentiality

EI will collect, use, disclose and store personal information only as needed to provide support, assess complaints or appeals, manage risk, comply with law and improve services. Information will be handled confidentially, subject to legal obligations, duty of care and the need to take protective action where health, safety or serious misconduct issues arise.

Monitoring, Risk Management and Continuous Improvement

EI will treat diversity, inclusion, cultural safety, wellbeing and equal opportunity as governance and quality matters, not only conduct matters.

EI will:

- identify and manage risks affecting students, staff and the organisation, including risks arising in online delivery, work placement, third-party delivery and student support activities.
- maintain records of complaints, incidents, support needs, reasonable adjustments, referrals, staff training and improvement actions, consistent with privacy obligations.

- categorise relevant incidents and complaints, including racism, antisemitism, disability-related barriers, sexual harassment, bullying, victimisation and cultural safety concerns.
- review feedback, complaints, appeals, support-plan data, student outcomes and other relevant information to identify trends and required actions.
- complete a formal review of this policy and related procedures at least annually, and earlier if there is a material incident, legal change, regulator guidance change or identified risk.

Responsibilities

CEO and General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide leadership, resources and oversight for implementation of this policy. • ensure complaints, appeals, significant incidents and improvement actions are reviewed and acted upon. • ensure staff training, monitoring and policy review occur as required. • ensure third-party arrangements (where applicable) and risk management systems support compliance with this policy.
Administration and Student Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide accessible information to prospective and current students. • coordinate pre-training review, student support identification and referral pathways. • maintain complaint, appeal and support records as required. • communicate available support services, reporting channels and student rights.
Training Department, Trainers and Assessors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver inclusive training and assessment and identify barriers to participation. • respond to student queries in a timely manner and refer students for additional support where needed. • implement reasonable adjustments and documented support strategies as approved. • report concerns, incidents, discrimination or cultural safety issues promptly.
All Staff and Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comply with this policy and related procedures. • treat all people with dignity, fairness and respect. • complete required training and participate in improvement actions. • escalate complaints, incidents or risks promptly.
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • treat others respectfully and comply with EI policies and lawful directions. • raise support needs, concerns or complaints promptly where they need assistance or wish to report an issue. • participate in agreed support strategies where relevant.

Procedures

	PROCEDURE	RESPONSIBILITY
ADMISSION AND ENROLMENT	<p>EI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> publish clear, accurate and accessible course information, entry requirements, support information and complaint information. use inclusive marketing and enrolment practices and avoid language or processes that unlawfully exclude or discourage protected cohorts. conduct pre-training review to assess course suitability, likely support needs and any risks relevant to completion. inform students how they can access trainers, assessors, support staff and relevant support services. consider reasonable adjustments and support options before declining an application on capability or suitability grounds. document key enrolment, suitability and support decisions. 	<p>CEO; Administration and Student Support; Trainers and Assessors</p>
LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT	<p>EI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review training and assessment materials for accessibility, inclusivity and cultural relevance. use delivery and assessment methods that reduce avoidable barriers while maintaining training package or accredited course requirements. provide students with reasonable access to trainers, assessors and other relevant staff throughout the course. monitor student progress and offer further support or adjustment where students are at risk of not making satisfactory progress. ensure that practical training, placement and third-party environments are included in inclusion, safety and support planning. 	<p>General Manager; Trainers and Assessors; Administration and Student Support</p>
STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	<p>EI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide mandatory induction and regular refresher training on diversity and inclusion, cultural safety, anti-racism, antisemitism, disability inclusion, reasonable adjustment, privacy, trauma-informed response, complaints handling and victimisation protections. maintain records of completed training and follow up non-completion. use supervision, feedback and performance management to address repeated or serious failures to meet expected conduct and practice. 	<p>CEO; General Manager</p>
SUPPORT SERVICES AND WELLBEING	<p>EI will:</p>	<p>Administration and Student Support;</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify training support and wellbeing needs at enrolment and throughout the student journey; • develop Individual Support Plans or similar documented arrangements for students who need additional support; • provide or arrange access to internal and external support services relevant to the student cohort; • communicate support pathways during orientation, through student information and when issues arise; • for overseas students, provide or arrange support consistent with ESOS and National Code obligations. 	<p>General Manager; Trainers and Assessors</p>
<p>REPORTING, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS</p>	<p>EI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inform students and staff of their right to report discrimination, harassment, racism, antisemitism, bullying, vilification, victimisation or other misconduct. • acknowledge complaints and appeals as soon as practicable and normally within 5 business days. • aim to resolve complaints and appeals within 20 business days where practicable, and advise parties if more time is required. • provide procedural fairness, confidentiality, impartial decision-making and the opportunity for all relevant parties to respond. • allow appeals of decisions by EI, its staff and relevant third parties where those decisions adversely affect the student. • advise appellants of independent review avenues and any no-cost or low-cost option available, and communicate any likely costs before referral. • record outcomes and any corrective or preventive action taken. • escalate urgent safety, criminal, child safety or critical incident matters immediately in line with EI's other policies and legal obligations. 	<p>CEO; General Manager; Administration and Student Support</p>
<p>MONITORING, RECORDS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT</p>	<p>EI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain a register of relevant complaints, appeals, incidents, support actions and improvement actions. • review trends and root causes, including issues affecting under-represented groups and First Nations cultural safety. • undertake periodic risk assessment and prevention planning for discrimination, harassment, victimisation and inclusion-related risks. • use student feedback, staff feedback, complaints, appeals, support data and performance data to inform improvement actions. 	<p>CEO; General Manager; Administration and Student Support; Trainers and Assessors</p>

- review this policy and its implementation at least annually and update it when evidence, law or regulator guidance indicates change is needed.

Related Documents

- Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Privacy Policy and Procedure
- Course Entry Interview and Enrolment Policy and Procedure
- Critical Incident Policy and Procedure
- Student handbooks, student code of conduct, and staff conduct requirements that support this policy

Document Control

Document Name:	Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy and Procedure
Version:	2.0
Quality Area:	Corporate Governance
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