

Student Diversity and Equity Policy

Purpose	2
Scope	2
Policy	2
Principles.....	2
Strategies.....	2
Discrimination, harassment and victimisation prevention	3
Admission.....	3
Participation.....	3
Course design	4
Support services.....	4
Reporting Incidents	4
Process	5
Monitoring and Improvement.....	5
Responsibilities	5
Definitions	6
Version history	7
Additional Information	7

Purpose

This Policy explains the approach of the Australia Institute of Future Education (**AIFE**) to accommodating diversity and equity in its student population, including how students from disadvantaged or under-represented backgrounds, and those with special needs, will be supported through their studies.

Scope

This Policy applies to all students.

Policy

AIFE embraces equity and diversity and will not tolerate discrimination in any forms, including discrimination on the basis of a person's special needs. To this end, AIFE's delivery of courses through an online platform will not impede its commitment to establishing an inclusive and supportive environment for all students, from the point of applying for entry through to conferral of award.

Processes are established to ensure all students, irrespective of their background, have equivalent opportunities for academic success.

AIFE will ensure that content for its online learning management system will be accessible to students with visual or auditory disabilities.

Access for students with physical disabilities will be accommodated.

Principles

The following principles guide AIFE in establishing diversity and equity regardless of background:

- Discrimination across AIFE's operations
- Management will be aware of its responsibilities to implementing processes that will create and maintain equal opportunity for all students from all backgrounds
- Staff members, AIFE's partners and all students will be made aware of AIFE's expectations around equity and diversity and legislative provisions relating to discrimination, harassment and victimisation of any person
- Students and staff will be supported when reporting instances of discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- Students are encouraged to disclose to AIFE any information that may require an adjustment in order to participate in education on the same bases as students without a disability
- AIFE will consider strategies to support participation from students that are early career researchers and identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) as part of localised initiatives including scholarships for domestic students.

Strategies

Key strategies for creating and maintaining an inclusive environment for all students are outlined below.

Discrimination, harassment and victimisation prevention

Culture | A culture of respect of equity and diversity will be created and maintained through a process of awareness, training, benchmarking, and monitoring.

Leadership | Senior staff will demonstrate a high level of commitment to AIFE's approach to equity and diversity.

Understanding of diversity | AIFE will understand the characteristics and mix of both prospective and enrolled students.

Understanding of barriers | AIFE maintains an understanding of common barriers to access and participation in education, including the impact of disabilities on participation.

Staff awareness | Staff induction will include a component on equity and diversity. In particular, staff members will be made aware of the need to be sensitive to the different backgrounds of all students.

Student awareness | Students receive regular communications, including an awareness session at orientation, on equity and diversity and their rights and responsibilities in maintaining an environment free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Adherence across services | Where services are provided by external parties, AIFE will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that service delivery are not discriminatory.

Institutional commitment | AIFE will adopt strategies to enable participation of ATSI researchers as part of a scholarship program.

Admission

Information | Information on admission processes and entry requirements is easily accessible and available in a range of formats and supports informed decision-making about studying at AIFE. To this end, AIFE will ensure all information is in plain English and that its website content complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, which provides guidance on publishing internet content that is accessible to people with disabilities (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>).

Proficiency assessment | For each commencing student, academic preparation, proficiency in English, and any impediment to participation and progress are assessed during the admission process and any reasonable adjustment necessary is implemented.

Needs assessment | The particular needs and preparedness of commencing students are individually assessed during the admission process including the need for additional support.

Participation

Transition | Commencing students receive transition support, including education sessions on expectations with regard to academic integrity and progress.

Facilities and resources | Electronic resources are easily accessible and available, and AIFE's university partners will be required to ensure facilities are appropriate to the needs of its staff who are enrolled in an AIFE course, including those staff who may have a disability and may require reasonable adjustments in order to participate in education. In particular, access to learning resources will not present unexpected barriers, costs or technology requirements.

Special consideration | Special consideration will be given, and reasonable adjustments made, if fair and practicable, to remove any impediments to participation by students who meet equity provisions.

Learning support | Learning support is tailored to the particular mix of students and consistent with the requirements of the course.

Course design

Curriculum | The curriculum, teaching and study materials, and equipment requirements for the course are selected and reviewed to confirm that they do not present unnecessary barriers to any students regardless of background.

Delivery modes and activities | The delivery modes and learning activities of the course take account of intended learning outcomes and the learning capacities and needs of all students.

Assessment | Assessment procedures and methodologies for the course are designed to enable students from all backgrounds to demonstrate the knowledge, skills or competencies being assessed.

Support services

Training | Staff members are aware of the support services available for the student cohort and are able to assist students from a variety of backgrounds to access the services as and when needed.

Service provision | Support services, including health and wellbeing services, are adequate considering the student cohorts and their needs.

Reporting Incidents

Reporting incidents plays a crucial role in:

- preventing discrimination or victimisation
- enabling participation of students regardless of background, and
- promoting and maintaining a culture of respect for equity and diversity.

Therefore, AIFE will ensure any person reporting incidents of discrimination or harassment will not be victimised and that all parties to the complaints are:

- provided with appropriate guidance and support
- treated fairly, impartially and within the principles of natural justice
- informed of their rights and obligations
- kept informed during any investigation
- given the opportunity to respond to any allegations that may be made against them, and
- informed of the result of any investigation.

Process

Any student who experiences discrimination, bullying or harassment (except sexual harassment – see *Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Prevention Policy and Procedure* or vilification should initially discuss their concerns with the perpetrator, if appropriate and safe to do so, or discuss their concerns with Student Services.

Staff from Student Services will provide support for any student who has been a victim of behaviour considered a breach of this Policy. Where necessary students will be referred to specialist support or advocacy services.

Students may also choose to lodge a complaint at any time following the steps outlined in the *Student Grievance Policy and Procedure*.

Confirmed breaches of this Policy will be addressed under the provisions of the *Student Misconduct Policy and Procedure* or the *Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure* depending on whether the alleged perpetrator is a student or staff member respectively.

Where a staff member witnesses alleged discrimination or victimisation of a student, they should first encourage the student to seek support and lodge a complaint as outlined above. Where appropriate the staff member may make a report to the CEO who may take action under the *Student Misconduct Policy and Procedure* or the *Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure*.

Monitoring and Improvement

Data on the participation, progression, and completion of identified student groups will be collected to:

- monitor trends in admission, participation, retention, and completion rates, and
- improve AIFE's equal opportunity strategies, and support services to students on an equitable basis regardless of backgrounds.

In addition to the above, student feedback is sought on their experience of diversity and equity at AIFE, including access to support services.

Outcomes from the data analysis will be benchmarked against relevant sector data and assist AIFE in establish targets, as appropriate.

The Board of Directors will receive an annual report on the adequacy and effectiveness of its diversity and equity strategies considering the particular mix of student subgroups and appropriate adjustments to strategies will be made, as required.

Responsibilities

All students are responsible for:

- ensuring their behaviour and conduct always reflect AIFE's standards as expressed in the *Student Code of Conduct*, and
- reporting instances of discrimination or victimisation promptly.

All staff are responsible for:

- implementing the diversity and equity strategies set out in this Policy, as appropriate
- compliance with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws at all times in carrying out their duties, including the obligation not to discriminate, harass or victimise any person
- ensuring their behaviour and conduct always reflect the standards of diversity and equity set out in this Policy
- any unfavourable action taken against a person that has reported alleged discrimination, and will be penalised accordingly, and
- reporting instances of discrimination or victimisation to the CEO promptly or supporting students who wish to make a complaint.

The CEO's responsibilities include:

- managing complaints under this Policy
- implementing the diversity and equity strategies set out above, and
- reporting annually on the implementation of diversity and equity strategies to the Board of Directors.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy, the following terms are defined as follows:

ATSI	Persons who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
Disability	Any physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual, psychiatric or learning disability, including: physical disfigurement, the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms and total or partial loss or absence of part of the body or a bodily function. It also includes a temporary, permanent, current, past or future disability, and chronic health conditions which may not commonly be considered disabilities. ¹
Discrimination	Treating or proposing to treat a person less favourably than another person, because of their background or certain personal characteristic such as sex, age, race or disability
Diversity	Variety of backgrounds, cultures, ages, abilities or characteristics
Equity	Provision of similar opportunities to participate in education
Governing Bodies	Members of the Board of Directors, and its sub-committees, and the Academic Board and its sub-committees
Victimisation	Subjecting or threatening to subject someone to a detriment because they have made a complaint, helped someone else make a complaint,

¹ Definition adapted from the definition of "disability" in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth)

	or refused to do something because it would be discrimination, harassment or victimisation
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Version history

Version #	Changes	Approval Body	Approval Date
1.0	New Policy	Board of Directors	05 September 2022

Additional Information

Policy Status	Approved
Policy Owner	CEO
Next Review Date	3 years from Approval Date
Related Internal Documents	Human Resource Management Policy and Procedure Student Code of Conduct Student Grievance Policy and Procedure Student Misconduct Policy and Procedure
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2022	Standards 2.2.1 to 2.2.3, 3.3.3 and 3.3.4
Other legislative or regulatory instruments	Disability Discrimination Act 1992

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