

# Access and Equity Policy

## 1. Purpose

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

## 2. Policy Statement

Pal Education is committed to providing quality training and assessment products and services in compliance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015.

Pal Education promotes, encourages and values equity and diversity with respect to clients. Pal Education will ensure services offered are provided in a fair and equitable manner to all clients, free from bias and discrimination.

Pal Education 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.

Pal Education 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 preference, family responsibility or political conviction;
- c) all nominations and enrolments into training courses and programs will be conducted at all times 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.

## 3. Definitions

**3.1 The following words and expressions have the following specific meaning, as in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015.**

**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.

### 3.2 Discrimination

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 on the basis of 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.

### 3.3 Workplace Harassment

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.

### 3.4 Sexual Harassment

The most common form of harassment is sexual harassment. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

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

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

### 3.5 Verbal Harassment

Examples of verbal harassment include, but are 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 and emails

### **3.6 Non-Verbal Harassment**

Examples of non-verbal harassment include, 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 and emails
- 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

### **3.7 Physical Harassment**

Examples of physical harassment include, but are 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

## **4. Policy Principles**

Pal Education will not tolerate any form of discrimination and we will apply the following principles in support of access and equity:

### **4.1 Access and Equity Principles**

- a) Pal Education abides by access and equity principles.
- b) Pal Education will respect a client's right to privacy, confidentiality and be sensitive to client needs.
- c) Pal Education provides equal opportunity for all learners and is responsive to the individual needs of students whose 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.
- d) 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).
- e) Real Property Learning (RPL) 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.

- f) Pal Education seeks to create a learning environment where all students are respected and can develop their full potential.
- g) All clients are given fair and reasonable opportunity to attend and complete training.
- h) 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.
- i) 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.
- j) All perceived deficiencies in the Access and Equity Policy are to be documented, assessed and reviewed by the RTO Manager of Pal Education.
- k) Pal Education 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.

## 4.2 Equal Opportunity

Pal Education 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.

## 4.3 Special Needs/Considerations

- a) Clients intending to enrol for training with Pal Education are requested prior to enrolment to advise Pal Education 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 Pal Education 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) Pal Education, 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.

#### **4.4 Language, Literacy and Numeracy**

- a) Each Training Package sets a minimum requirement in language, literacy, and numeracy skills of learners, with which Pal Education must abide.
- b) Pal Education 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.
- c) Where a student 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, Pal Education 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.

#### **4.5 Harassment**

- a) Harassment will not be tolerated at Pal Education. 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.
- b) Serious cases of harassment may constitute a criminal offence.
- c) Pal Education will not tolerate behaviour which is considered to be sexual harassment and expects all staff, contractors and clients to treat each other with dignity and respect.

#### **4.6 Bullying and Violence**

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

#### **4.7 Vilification**

- a) Pal Education will not tolerate behaviour which vilifies another person and expects all staff, contractors and clients to treat each other with dignity and respect.

## 4.8 Complaints

- a) Pal Education 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 or 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 Pal Education 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 sufficient time to prepare and or respond.
- e) Pal Education acknowledges that it is of paramount importance and in the best interests of all parties that confidentiality is maintained during these procedures.
- f) Pal Education encourages the reporting of behaviour that breaches equal opportunity policy, but will not tolerate vexatious or frivolous complaints.

## 4.9 Victimization

- a) In order for complaints to be brought forward, complainants must feel secure in the knowledge that the Pal Education procedures will be followed without fear of reprisal.
- b) Pal Education will not victimise or treat any person unfairly for making a harassment complaint.
- c) Pal Education 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.

## 5. Pal Education Responsibilities

Pal Education 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.

Pal Education will:

- 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 clients to ensure the elimination of discrimination and harassment;
- Ensure that there is no discrimination against any individual client or group of clients 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.

### **5.1 RTO Manager Responsibilities**

The RTO Manager of Pal Education is responsible for client equity.

The RTO Manager will not condone nor engage in discriminatory/harassing behaviour.

The RTO Manager is responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of this policy and that complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the terms of the Complaints and Appeals Policy.

The RTO Manager must ensure staff act according to this policy and all clients are made aware of their rights and responsibilities pursuant to this policy.

The RTO Manager will maintain the confidentiality of all complaints. If the RTO Manager feels that they are not the appropriate person to deal with the complaint, they will refer the matter to either a member of the management team or an external independent party for review and/or action.

### **5.2 Staff, Contractors and Clients Responsibilities**

Pal Education staff, contractors and clients have the responsibility to:

- 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 Pal Education 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 a Pal Education staff, contractor or client feels harassed, bullied or otherwise a victim of unwelcome behaviour, the staff, 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 CEO of Pal Education should be contacted.



## 6. Legislation

This policy reflects our commitment to the following legislation:

- a) National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (NVR Act) – Commonwealth
- b) Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Act 1990 (New South Wales)
- c) Education and the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Victoria)
- d) Vocational Education and Training Act 1996 (Western Australia)
- e) Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 (Queensland)
- f) Training and Skills Development Act 2008 (South Australia)
- g) Training and Workforce Development Act 2013 (Tasmania)
- h) Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Commonwealth)
- i) Disability Discrimination Act 2009 (Commonwealth)
- j) Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
- k) Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)
- l) Discrimination Act 1991 (Australian Capital Territory)
- m) Disability Services Act 1991 (Australian Capital Territory)
- n) Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (New South Wales)
- o) Anti-Discrimination Act (Northern Territory)
- p) Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Queensland)
- q) Equal Opportunity Act 1994 (South Australia)
- r) Sex Discrimination Act 1994 (Tasmania)
- s) Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tasmania)
- t) Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Victoria)
- u) Disability Act 2006 (Victoria)
- v) Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (Western Australia)

## 7. Records Management

All documentation from regarding complaints concerning Access and Equity matters are maintained in accordance with Records Management Policy. (See Records Management Policy)

## 8. Monitoring and Improvement

All Access and Equity practices are monitored by the RTO Manager of Pal Education and areas for improvement identified and the RTO Manager must get approval from the CEO before any changes are acted upon. (See Continuous Improvement Policy).

**Note:** CEO of Pal Education provides full authority to RTO Manager to deal with all matters relevant with compliance and RTO management.