Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to provide our staff and students:

- a diverse, safe and inclusive learning environment.
- an environment that respects and values the individuality of each student.
- a culturally safe and supportive learning environment.
- a learning environment and workplace where all individuals feel respected, valued, and empowered including:
    - young people,
    - First Nations people,
    - people from culturally and linguistically diverse background,
    - people of different genders,
    - people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds,
    - neurodivergent people, and
    - people who may identify as LGBTIQ+.

2. Definitions

First Nations people - refers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have identified themselves or have been identified by a representative (for example, their parent or guardian), as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. They are not one group but rather comprise hundreds of groups that have their own distinct set of languages, histories and cultural traditions.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) refers to individuals or communities who come from different cultural backgrounds and speak languages other than English. The term is often used in to describe people who have migrant, refugee, or First Nations backgrounds. Key Aspects of CALD:

- Cultural diversity – Includes people from different ethnicities, traditions, religions, and customs.

- Linguistic diversity – Covers those who speak languages other than English at home or as their first language.
- Migration and refugee backgrounds – Recognises that people may have immigrated from different countries, bringing diverse experiences and challenges.
- First Nations communities – While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have unique identities, they are often included in discussions about cultural diversity.

Neurodivergent refers to individuals whose brains function differently from what is considered "typical" (or neurotypical). This term is commonly used to describe people with conditions such as:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyslexia (difficulty with reading and language processing)
- Dyspraxia (challenges with coordination and movement)
- Dyscalculia (difficulty with math-related concepts)
- Tourette Syndrome
- Other cognitive or learning differences

The term neurodivergent is part of the neurodiversity movement, which emphasises that differences in thinking, learning, and processing information are natural variations of the human brain, rather than "disorders" that need to be fixed. It promotes inclusivity, acceptance, and the idea that diverse ways of thinking can bring together unique strengths and perspectives.

People who may identify as LGBTIQ+ refers to individuals who might recognise themselves as part of the LGBTIQ+ community. The acronym stands for:

- L – Lesbian
- G – Gay
- B – Bisexual
- T – Transgender
- I – Intersex
- Q – Queer or Questioning
- + –Other diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, and variations in sex characteristics that are not explicitly included in the acronym (such as non-binary, asexual, pansexual, etc.)

The phrase "may identify as" acknowledges that identity is personal, fluid, and self-defined. It respects that individuals might be exploring or affirming their identity at different stages of their

lives and that not everyone uses the same labels. It also avoids assuming how someone identifies, reinforcing inclusivity.

3. Policy statement

3.1 Commitment to diversity and inclusion

VACTS recognises that diversity and inclusion bring a broad range of perspectives, enriching the learning experience. We are committed to:

- Promoting and supporting diversity in all its forms, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, people from culturally and linguistically diverse background, neurodivergent people, and people who may identify as LGBTIQ+.
- Encouraging an inclusive environment where everyone is treated equitably and has the opportunity to contribute to training and assessment.
- Ensuring compliance with Australian legislative requirements, including the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, *Age Discrimination Act 2004*, and *Fair Work Act 2009*.

3.2 Principles

- **Respect:** We promote respect for each individual and acknowledge diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- **Equity:** We strive to ensure fair treatment, access, and opportunity for all, taking proactive steps to remove barriers to participation.
- **Cultural Safety:** We work to create a culturally safe environment that acknowledges and respects First Nations people and CALD communities cultures and histories.

3.3 Recruitment

Our recruitment policies encourage applications from people from diverse backgrounds and ensure selection is based on merit, qualifications, skills and experience and is free from bias or discrimination.

3.4 Training and Development

All new staff recruited by VACTS will be educated on our diversity and inclusion policies and procedures as part of their induction.

All staff will be provided with diversity and inclusion training as part of the ongoing professional development each year.

A culture of respect and inclusion will be enshrined in all our activities and our communication with students and staff.

3.5 Inclusive Learning Environment

We will create a safe and inclusive learning environment by:

- Displaying signs that enforce our values of respect, inclusivity, and empathy;
- Using inclusive and gender-neutral language in our course information, enrolment form and training;
- Communicating our values and zero tolerance to discrimination or harassment verbally on the first day of any training,
- Providing additional support to students who need it;
- Showing empathy and understanding to students;
- Promoting equity, respect and inclusion;
- Being flexible to different student needs; and
- Addressing any breach of our policy on discrimination and harassment immediately with all those involved.

3.6 Inclusive Learning and Assessment Materials

Course materials, assessments, and resources will be reviewed as part of the pre-assessment validation process to ensure they are accessible and culturally appropriate. This includes:

- ensuring that case studies and role plays reflect a variety of cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic situations, and perspectives;
- avoiding jargon, idioms, or colloquialisms that may not be universally understood or could exclude certain groups;
- ensuring language is gender-inclusive and avoiding stereotypes or assumptions about roles based on cultural background; and
- ensuring images, videos, and graphics are culturally diverse and represent people of different ages, genders, ethnicities, and abilities.

We will provide reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities or special learning requirements.

3.7 Anti-discrimination and anti-harassment

We will enforce a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of racism, discrimination, bullying, or harassment. We have in place clear reporting procedures for instances of discrimination, harassment or exclusion.

3.8 Cultural Safety for First Nations people

The following strategies that VACTS will apply to establish and support a culturally safe learning and work environment for First Nations people:

(i) **Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners.** VACTS will include an Acknowledgement of Country on our website and in our classrooms using the below:

VACTS acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

(ii) **Recruitment.** First Nations peoples enrich the workplace by adding cultural diversity and fostering a more inclusive environment. Our recruitment policies encourage applications from First Nations people and people from diverse backgrounds and ensure selection is based on merit, qualifications, skills and experience and is free from bias or discrimination.

(iii) **Induction Training.** Induction training for all new staff includes training on our diversity and inclusion policies and procedures.

(iv) **Annual Cultural Awareness Training.** Cultural awareness training is a key component of our efforts to build a more inclusive learning environment for First Nations students.All staff will participate in cultural awareness training at least **once per year**. This will include topics such as:

- why cultural awareness is important
- the cultures of First Nations peoples
- stereotypes, biases and cultural misunderstandings that can arise in cross-cultural interactions
- communication styles, nonverbal cues and other cultural differences that can impact learning and relationships

- strategies for promoting cultural awareness and inclusion in the classroom (online and in physical classrooms)
- important dates
- the benefits of inclusion for all students and staff.

(v) **Encouraging and supporting First Nations students to enrol**. People from under-represented groups (including people with disability and First Nations people) are explicitly encouraged to apply for enrolment on our website and in our Course Brochures.

The Student Support Officer will support the student to complete the enrolment process and identify any special needs and adjustments that can be made to ensure their successful studies as part of the enrolment process.

(vi) **Creating a culturally safe learning environment for First Nations students.** We recognise that First Nations peoples do not always have the same level of access to vocational education and training as non-Indigenous Australians, nor the same positive experiences. In light of this, we provide specific supports to First Nations people to assist them to participate in and complete training.

4. Considerations

None.

5. Procedure

Steps		Person/s responsible
5.1 Diversity and Inclusion		
i.	**Recruit staff from diverse backgrounds** – Advertisements encourage applications from people from diverse backgrounds and from First Nations people. – Selection is based on merit, qualifications and skills and is free from discrimination or bias.	CEO
ii.	**Train staff in diversity and inclusion** – Induction training includes training on our diversity and inclusion policies and procedures and our organisation culture which respects and values people from diverse backgrounds. – Annual training session for all staff on diversity, inclusion, cultural sensitivity and student wellbeing.	CEO
iii.	**Encourage enrolments from First Nations people and people with disability** – Website and course brochures include information encouraging First Nations people and people with disability to apply for enrolment. – Student Support Officer provides support to students with understanding the enrolment process.	CEO
iv.	**Identify additional learning supports** – Student Support Officer assists students to identify any additional learning supports they may need, and that VACTS can provide.	CEO, Student Support Officer, Trainers and Assessors
v.	**Review training and assessment materials to ensure they are inclusive and reflective of diversity**	CEO, Training Manager, Trainers and

	– Pre-validation of learning and assessment materials. – Students and trainers are encouraged at any time to make suggestions for improvement.	Assessors
vi.	**Creating a culturally safe learning environment for First Nations students.** – Taking the time to build rapport and trust with First Nations students. – Respecting the identify and experience of First Nations students. – Engaging in active listening, showing genuine interest in the students' backgrounds, and creatingan environment where students feel comfortable sharing aspects of their culture and experiences. – Creating a positive setting where people are respected and feel comfortable being themselves. – Establishing classroom norms that prioritise respect, inclusivity, and empathy, ensuring all students feel valued. – Being mindful of body language, tone, and the use of eye contact, which may have different cultural implications for First Nations students. – Addressing any instances of racial prejudice or cultural insensitivity promptly and effectively. – Providing tailored and one-on-one support to First Nations students. – Addressing unconscious bias in assessment by ensuring there are consistent marking standards. – Providing additional support to address barriers to completion of training . – Recognising and celebrating important dates and events, such as NAIDOC Week and National Sorry Day. – Informing First Nations people where information (including	CEO, Training Manager, Trainers and Assessors

	learning and assessment material, advertising) may contain images, voices and names of deceased persons. – Linking First Nations students with mentorship programs with Indigenous role models and peer support groups.	
vii.	**Consider any Opportunities for Improvement to this process** Consider the opportunities for improvement that may have emerged during the process and record these within a Continuous Improvement Report for consideration at a future management meeting.	CEO, Student Support Officer, Training Manager, Trainer

6. Related documents/forms

Forms

– Enrolment Form

– Continuous Improvement Report

7. Reference(s)

2025 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) :

Outcome Standards for NVR RTOs, Standard 2.5. The learning environment promotes and supports the diversity of VET students.

ESOS Act 2000 - National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018, Standards 6

Standard 6 Overseas student support services: This standard sets out that registered providers must assist overseas students to adjust to study and life in Australia and have appropriate orientation programs that help overseas students to access the information and services they require.

8. Relevant legislation

- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Age Discrimination Act 2004.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

- General enquiries: (02) 9284 9600 / General enquiries and publications: 1300 369 711
- Complaints Info line: 1300 656 419
- Website:www.humanrights.gov.au

Victoria Equal Opportunity Commission

- Telephone: (03) 9281 7111
- Toll free: 1800 134 142
- Website: http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/
- Email: eoc@vicnet.net.au

Eliminating Anti-Semitism -

https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/eliminating-antisemitism.pdf