

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Approving Authority	Board 10 th December 2020
Responsible Officers	Principal and Registrar
Version	2.0 Reformatting, updated definitions and inclusion of General Principles. Principal approved 16 th November 2020
Next Scheduled Review	Nov 2023
Related Legislation and Regulations	Higher Education Standards Framework 2015. Standard 2 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015. Standards 1,4,5 and 8. Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975 Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (as amended) NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 Work Health & Safety Act 2011 TEQSA Guidance Note Diversity and Equity 2017
Associated Documents	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Policy Academic Freedom Policy Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure International Student Policies Mental Health Policy and Procedure Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure Grievance Handling Procedure SASH Policy and Procedure Complaints Lodgement Form Strategic Plan Workforce Plan

1 SCOPE

Diversity and Equity as an intent is applicable across all areas of College policy and practice. For students, in particular, the areas outlined in the TEQSA Standard 2.2. Diversity and Equity is inclusive of admissions, learning and teaching requirements and student support both in policy and practice. The principles and practices also apply across all sectors.

This policy also relates to all workplace policies for staff and faculty.

A major focus is equal opportunities for success for all students and a particular connection with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. All staff and students are expected to adhere to all relevant policy and legislation on equity, diversity and anti-discrimination.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy is to provide a statement to outline the Australian College of Christian Studies' (ACCS) commitment to the biblical principles of justice and equity. It provides a statement of intent in support of the College's values best educational practice and employment in line with relevant legislation and regulations.

The College as an expression of beliefs as expressed in the Statement of Faith, doctrine, principles and practices and therefore, seeks to ensure students and staff, treat others fairly, justly in a spirit of Christian love and grace.

The policies and practices of ACCS are designed to ensure it is responsive to the diverse needs of individuals and inclusive of people from a diverse range of cultural and learning backgrounds. In doing so, the College is committed to addressing needs relating to equality of opportunity that might arise in areas such as:

- Academic success
- Disability
- Human Rights
- Cultural diversity

3 DEFINITIONS

Harassment: Harassment may be sexual in nature or based on gender, race, disability, sexual preference or a range of other factors. In this policy harassment also includes workplace harassment, or bullying, which is described as the repeated less favourable treatment of a person by another or others in the workplace, which may be considered unreasonable and inappropriate workplace practice. It includes behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates.

Disadvantaged and Under-represented Groups: Includes historically disadvantaged groups or underrepresented populations in Higher Education, other groups protected in Equal Opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation and those covered by the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program.

Disadvantaged and Under-represented Groups include but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,
- people from lower socio-economic backgrounds,
- people with disability,
- people from remote, rural or isolated areas,
- people who are the first in their family to attend a university or other higher educational institution,
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and
- people in areas of study where they have been under-represented.

Diversity: Recognition and respect for an individual's or a group's uniqueness and possible differences.

Discrimination: Occurs when a person is discriminated against in the workplace and in certain areas of public life, because of their age, race, colour, nationality, ethnicity, sex, marital status, or of a disability.

Equal Opportunities: Equality without discrimination or disadvantage due to prejudice or bias.

Equity: Being fair and impartial.

Inclusivity: Policies, processes and practices of including individuals who otherwise might be marginalised, prevented or even ostracised due to some attributes.

Religious Exemptions: The Sexual Discrimination Act 1984, Section 37 and 38 states, it is not unlawful for religious educational institutions to discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or relationship status or pregnancy ... in accordance with the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings of a particular religion or creed ... in good faith to avoid injury to the religious susceptibilities of adherents of that religion or creed".

4 POLICY/PROCEDURE STATEMENT

As a Christian educational institution, ACCS delivers its courses within a Christian evangelical ethos. Staff and faculty, cognisant of the Christian ethos and the ACCS Statement of Faith that undergirds all operations, policies and studies at ACCS are required to support the stated beliefs, values, and mission through practices and communication. ACCS adheres to the laws applicable to institutions for religious purposes.

ACCS is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and valuing of diversity in employment and education. The College recognises the right of all students and staff to work and study in an environment free from harassment, bullying and indirect or unlawful discrimination.

The policy of ACCS includes:

- The determination of maintaining a harmonious equitable and inclusive work and study environment.
- Both principles and practices of access and equity within policies and procedures for all students and staff in keeping with its Christian doctrine, principles and practices.
- The recognition that some students or staff members as a result of past inequities may now require measures to improve educational and vocational opportunities.

The College:

1. Promotes understanding and application of Christian biblical ethical principles through its teaching programs;
2. Provides a safe and congenial learning environment for students and staff;
3. Encourages students and staff to recognise the limitations of a monocultural worldview, and to develop a more comprehensive worldview on the basis of biblical principles;
4. Encourages the practice of sound ethical principles in College and community life;
5. Ensures that all students and staff are treated fairly and justly;
6. Educates the College community on the College's philosophy, policy and procedures in relation to matters of ethics, justice, equity and responsibility;
7. Ensures that the College's policies, practices and official documentation are in accord with biblical principles, and comply with the principles and legislation with which the College is required to comply;
8. Avoids the use of gender exclusive or sexist language in its publications and discourage the use of such language by students or staff;
9. Provides equal opportunities for men and women to participate in job opportunities offered by the College and on related committees;
10. Creates equal opportunities for both male and female students at all levels of study;
11. Seeks to offer employment and training/education opportunities that cater for individuals with disabilities, within the constraints imposed by being a non-funded private tertiary institution, offering a limited number of paid jobs and a limited range of courses;
12. Encourages full-time and part-time, on-campus, mixed mode and distance education students equally, and
13. Provides opportunities for staff and students to express ideas, comments and concerns openly or in confidence, without risk of discrimination or reprisal.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Reports and complaints of inequity, harassment, bullying and discrimination will be treated seriously by the College and will be investigated promptly in a thorough and confidential manner ensuring that complainants and witnesses are not victimised. The principles of natural justice apply and will guide the application of this policy and associated procedures.

The complaint resolution process is carried out in good faith and complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, misconceived or lacking in substance will be rejected if a preliminary investigation of the facts indicates this. The College may initiate disciplinary procedure investigations immediately in response to allegations of conduct or behaviour that may be misconduct.

The College will ensure that staff, students and members of the College community are informed of this policy and their responsibilities in ensuring that it is upheld, and that managers and other supervisory staff are aware of their particular responsibilities in the prevention and resolution of complaints of inequity, harassment, bullying and discrimination.

All reports are to be fully investigated with records of the report and response maintained by the Dean of Students or College Principal.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy acknowledges the following resources:

Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme, <<https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-participation-and-partnerships-programme-heppp>>

Research reports available through the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Curtin University (2016 and previous), <<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/research/research-reports/>>.

National Education Association [NEA] (2015), Diversity Toolkit Introduction, <<http://www.nea.org/tools/diversity-toolkit-introduction.html>>.

Pitman, T. and Koshy, P. (2014), A Framework for Measuring Equity Performance in Australian Higher Education – Draft Framework Document, <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Draft_Equity_Performance_Framework_Report_V1.6.pdf>.

TEQSA (2016), Explanations of terms in Part A of the HES Framework 2015, <<http://www.teqsa.gov.au/explanations-hes-framework-terms>>.

Universities Australia (October 2011), National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities, <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/ArticleDocuments/376/National_Best_Practice_Framework_for_Indigenous_Cultural_Competency_in_Australian_Universities.pdf.aspx>.