

Access and Equity Policy

Policy Number: TL011

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Version	4.0
Policy Name	Access and Equity
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Related Policies	TL001 Development and Delivery of Training Programs Policy TL002 Assessment Appeals Policy TL005 Enrolments and Withdrawal of Enrolments Policy TL009 Student Support Services Policy TL012 Engagement with Industry Policy Procedure TL025 Assessment and Evidence Collection Policy P005 Complaints Handling Policy Procedure
Related Documents	

This Policy applies to Mid North Coast Community College (the College) and its trading arms.

1. PURPOSE

This document describes how the College values, promotes, encourages and integrates access and equity principles by treating all students and individuals seeking to enrol into the College programs equally and fairly.

The College is committed to providing and maintaining an inclusive and diverse workforce and a positive learning environment that fosters equal benefits and opportunities for people to pursue their vocational and educational goals through participation in the College programs.

2. SCOPE

This policy forms part of the College's Quality Management System and applies to all current and prospective students, staff and educational activities.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The College is committed to providing inclusive and flexible learning and assessment options, allowing students and staff alternatives which recognise the diversity of their individual needs and circumstances.

The College is committed to developing a diverse environment aiding students in their learning goals to access, participate and enjoy the benefits of education and employment in compliance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015, and all relevant national & state legislations.

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Through application of access and equity principles, the College ensure that all students and potential students have access to the benefits of training and assessment regardless of their gender, age, race, religion, culture, linguistic background, marital status, geographic location, socio-economic background, disability, sexual preference, family responsibility or political conviction.

3.1 Access and Equity Principles

The College abides by access and equity principles and respects a student’s right to privacy and confidentiality and are sensitive to student needs.

The College will provide:

- Access to appropriate quality training and assessment services
- Increased opportunity to participate in training
- Equity for all people through the fair and appropriate allocation of resources
- Equal opportunity without discrimination

The College provide equal opportunity for all students and are responsive to their individual needs where 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.

The College will ensure:

- The Principles of access and equity are incorporated in all training and assessment processes that impact students and potential students;
- All nominations and enrolments into training courses and programs will be conducted in an ethical and responsible manner, ensuring fairness and compliance with Equal Opportunity legislation; and
- All students have access to the training resources, facilities, equipment, support services, information, training and assessment staff, materials, assessment opportunities and training opportunities that meet their individual needs.

4. PROCEDURES

The College will demonstrate its commitment to access and equity through:

- Student recruitment and enrolment processes that are fair and non-discriminatory
- Providing relevant training that is flexible and can be applied to diverse student cohorts
- Seeking to provide funding, dependent of our financial resources, to assist targeted equity groups to enrol in our programs and courses
- The provision of facilities and resources that are accessible to all students
- The availability of student support services
- A fair complaints and appeals process
- Engaging with relevant industry groups
- Raising awareness of equity issues

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4.1 Inviting Disclosure

- a) At enrolment, students are asked to identify personal needs or circumstances that may exist and for which the College can provide additional support. Students may be identified from target groups including:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
 - People from culturally diverse or non-English speaking backgrounds
 - Unemployed individuals or people re-entering the workforce
 - People living with disabilities
 - People from rural and remote areas
 - Members of other disadvantaged groups
- b) Students are encouraged to discuss any special needs and/or reasonable adjustments that may be required or that may assist in the performance of their studies. These discussions will be documented on as a note on the student file.
- c) The College will provide advice and guidance to students on:
 - the suitability of the program to each student
 - any special physical or cultural requirements for the program
 - reasonable adjustments that can be made to the learning and assessment activities
 - support services that are available

4.2 Making Reasonable Adjustment

- a) Reasonable adjustment in vocational education aims to increase the participation of all students, including those with disability, and to reduce the impact of disability on achieving a vocational qualification leading to employment.
- b) All students are given fair and reasonable opportunity to attend and complete training in a learning environment that is respectful and empowering. A collaborative approach will be taken to provide flexible delivery options to allow a student the opportunity to succeed. However, any flexible delivery that is undertaken will not compromise the integrity of the course and the assessment requirements. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - A student who has a visual impairment may be provided with large print on screen as this could also be used in the workplace
 - A student with a physical disability may be allowed more time to key in text, or be allowed to use a program that speeds up this process
 - A student with low literacy skills, where mastery of these skills is not required by the competency standard and/or the assessment benchmarks, will be allowed to answer questions verbally rather than writing them down in a test situation
- c) 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.
- d) The College provides reasonable adjustments to meet the specific requirements of students through the provision of adjustments, including:
 - Flexible course delivery and assessment arrangements
 - Modifications to the learning environment
 - Flexibility in course delivery and assessment scheduling.
 - Provision of other support services or assistance

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- e) The requirement to provide adjustments for students applies to all Adult and Community Education (ACE) training and assessment delivered by the college, including:
- National Vocational Education and Training (VET) accredited programs and courses delivered by the College.
 - Non accredited programs and courses delivered by the College.
 - Fee for service (FFS) programs and courses.
 - Nationally and/or State funded programs and courses delivered by the College.
- f) Reasonable adjustments are recorded in the relevant training and assessment strategy for the learning program, on the students training and assessment plan, and, the student support plan.

4.3 Complaints Handling

- a) Complaints are investigated in accordance with the College's **Complaints Handling Policy**.

5. VARIATIONS

The College reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

6. DEFINITIONS

As defined in the Quality Management Strategy and the following:

- **Indirect discrimination** is the outcome of rules, practices and a decision which treats people equally and therefore appear to be neutral; but which, in fact, perpetuate an initially unequal situation and therefore significantly reduce a person's chances of obtaining or retaining a benefit or opportunity. Rules, practices and decisions are applied to all groups alike, but it is the very assumption of a likeness that constitutes the discrimination.
- **Direct discrimination** is any action which specifically excludes a person or group of people from a benefit or opportunity, or significantly reduces their chances of obtaining it, because their status or personal characteristics, irrelevant to the situation e.g., sex, ethnic origin, etc, are applied as a barrier. Direct discrimination focuses on differences between people.
- **Systemic discrimination** is discrimination perpetuated by rules, practices and decisions which can be disadvantage a group of people because of their status or characteristics and serve to advantage others of different status or characteristics. Direct and indirect discrimination contribute to systemic discrimination.
- **Equity** focuses on outcomes. Equity is not concerned with treating people in the same way; it is concerned with ensuring that all groups of people participate and benefit to the same level.
- **Access and equity** means policies and approaches aimed at ensuring that VET is responsive to the individual needs of College students 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.

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