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Name:	Access and Equity Policy and Procedures
Endorsed by:	Continuous Improvement and Management Committee
Date approved:	March 2020
Review Date:	September 2021

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## PURPOSE

As a values-based organisation, Benchmark College is committed to ensuring access and equity to all students or prospective students. The intent of this policy and procedure is to outline how the organisation is responsive to student's individual needs whose age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability, sexuality, language skills, literacy or numeracy level, unemployment, imprisonment or remote location may otherwise become a barrier to accessing Benchmark College's programs or a successful training outcome.

## SCOPE

This policy defines how Benchmark College provides an inclusive education service and a learning environment which is free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation and one in which student opportunities for successful completion are optimised.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Student Handbook
- Language Literacy and Numeracy Policy
- Individual Training Plan
- Code of Conduct – Staff
- Staff Manual
- Fees and Charges Policy and Procedures
- Staff Recruitment Policy and Procedure
- Consumer Protection Policy
- Student Support Policy
- Assessment Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Continuous Improvement Policy
- Student Selection and Enrolment Policy and Procedure
- Refund Policy and Procedures
- Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy and Procedure

## RELEVANT STANDARDS, LEGISLATION AND GUIDELINES

- Aspects of Standard 5 of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015
- Smart and Skilled Contract Terms and Conditions (current version)
- Smart and Skilled Operating Guidelines (current version)
- VET Student Loans Act 2016
- VET Student Loans Rules (current version)
- VET Student Loans (Charges) Regulations (current version)
- Provisions in Federal and State legislation – See Table 1.

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**Table 1: Federal and State Legislation**

**Federal Legislation:**

Age Discrimination Act 2004  
 Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986  
 Disability Discrimination Act 1992  
 Racial Discrimination Act 1975  
 Sex Discrimination Act 1984  
 Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012  
 Fair Work Act 2009

**State Legislation:**

New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)  
 Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)

**DEFINITIONS/ ACRONYMS**

**Access and Equity**

Access and equity means policies and approaches aimed at ensuring that Vocational Education and Training 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<sup>1</sup>.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by the law. This includes bullying someone because of a protected characteristic<sup>2</sup>.

**Direct Discrimination**

Direct discrimination happens when someone is treated unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by the law. Direct discrimination often happens because people make unfair assumptions about what people with certain personal characteristics can and cannot do<sup>2</sup>.

**Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination occurs when an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice is imposed that disadvantages a person or group because of a personal characteristic<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/discrimination> viewed on 19th March 2020

## POLICY

Benchmark College is committed to ensuring that all enrolled students have access to educational opportunities.

Benchmark College applies easily defined and tangible rules in support of access and equity, namely:

- All students are given fair and reasonable opportunity to enrol, undertake and complete their training within expected and agreed timeframes.
- 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.
- Discrimination, direct or indirect, is not tolerated and will lead to disciplinary action of the offender if proved.

Perceived deficiencies in the Access and Equity Policy and Procedures and its implementation are documented and reviewed as part of the Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedures. Deficiencies are investigated to determine whether a problem or policy discrepancy exists, and if so, the impact of that deficiency, how the policy should be amended to eliminate the deficiency and whether the suggested amendment is consistent with a 'best practice strategy'.

The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for the implementation of the Access and Equity legislation and timely distribution to its employees and students.

### Legislation

Benchmark College acknowledges the legal responsibility that reasonable steps have been taken to prevent discrimination and harassment from occurring in the workplace and learning environment.

Benchmark College abides by the human rights and anti-discrimination legislation that protects those involved in the training system. This legislation makes discrimination and harassment in the provision of education, employment and the provision of goods and services unlawful.

Details concerning the scope of Benchmark College's Access and Equity Policy are clearly displayed throughout the organisation.

### Equality in Student Selection

Benchmark College is committed to ensuring that the student selection processes is fair and equitable and, is consistent with the requirements of Benchmark College and Training Package requirements. Benchmark College ensures that candidates who do not meet entry requirements will be advised.

Therefore, selection into our programs is based upon the candidate:

- Meet Benchmark College entry requirements
- Satisfying appropriate funding body (Smart and Skilled or VET Student Loans) eligibility criteria (if applicable)
- Provide evidence of an achieved pre-requisite qualification or employment experience (if applicable).
- Meeting required industry age requirements that may be in place for a particular course
- Has or can access particular requirements pertaining to their mode of study (if applicable).

### Equality in Student Enrolment

Benchmark College is committed to the enrolment of students when the organisation has the capacity to deliver the course for which the student is enrolling and where the student has;

- Applied in the prescribed manner
- Meets the selection requirements for the relevant course
- Meets the selection criteria for the course, or have satisfied the Training Manager of their equivalent qualification or experience to undertake the course
- Supplied accurate personal and previous qualification information
- Agreed to abide by the organisation's policies, procedures and code of conduct
- Paid the prescribed fees (refer to the Fees and Charges Policy and Procedures).

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## Wellbeing of students under 18 years of age

Benchmark College reports any concerns about the safety, welfare and well-being of students in accordance with State Child Protection Acts (refer to Table 1: State Legislation) to the relevant State Department of Family and Community Services.

### Equity and Access

Benchmark College is committed to providing support services and equal access to opportunities for students with a disability, in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992).

Benchmark College shall always respect a student's right to privacy and confidentiality in relation to their disability and be sensitive to the needs of students with a disability. Students with a disability are required to have the ability to fulfil the core requirements and satisfactorily complete competencies/learning outcomes within all courses to attain the relevant award. However, it is recognised that flexibility in arrangements may need to be implemented. Such arrangements may be negotiated with the Training Manager and/ or CEO.

Assessments conducted as part of recognition assessment are moderated alongside other samples of regular assessment processes to ensure consistency and parity of assessment across all instances of assessment, whether undertaken at the end of a course of training or as a result of recognition application.

Our student selection processes are non-discriminatory and are based on objective entry criterion. For more information see the Student selection and Enrolment Policy and Procedure.

Benchmark College is committed to supporting students with special needs. We do this by identifying special needs and, where appropriate, make reasonable adjustments to the learning and assessment environment. For those students who are financially disadvantaged the organisation attempts to minimise barriers to application and enrolment through the use of payment plans and where appropriate waiving of fees.

Benchmark College is an equal opportunity employer and training provider, and as such does not discriminate against, or favour target groups in the recruitment of students or staff.

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.

All Candidates are provided with information about access and equity issues and Benchmark College's Complaints complaint and appeals process. Access and equity principles are communicated to candidates using the following methods:

- Student Handbook
- Benchmark College website

### Making a Complaint

All Candidates have the right to object to discrimination and harassment in any form, and to complain when such discrimination takes place. For full information on the complaint process please refer to Benchmark College's Complaints and Appeals Policy and procedure available at [www.benchmark.edu.au](http://www.benchmark.edu.au).

## Application and Enrolment Procedures

<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Pre-enrolment information</b>
	<p>Applicant has access to the pre-enrolment information listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pre-enrolment Flyer</b> Contains important information to help applicants make an informed decision about their training and outlines how to find Benchmark College Policies and Procedures.</li> <li>• <b>Course Information Flyer</b> Contains information about the relevant course, including how the course will be delivered and fee information.</li> <li>• <b>Unique Student Identifier</b> All students enrolled in Nationally Recognised Training must have a Unique Student Identifier (USI).</li> <li>• <b>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer</b> Applicants who want to apply for RPL should contact Benchmark College. If they are applying for Credit Transfer, applicants complete the Credit Transfer form enclosed and Consent &amp; Verification Form. They will need to provide a copy of their Qualification or Statement of Attainment and Transcript (Record of Results) with their application.</li> <li>• <b>VET Student Loans</b> If applying for an approved Diploma course, students may be eligible to apply for a VET Student Loan.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Application</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply online for the Unique Student Identifier <a href="http://www.usi.gov.au">http://www.usi.gov.au</a> or complete consent form for Benchmark College to apply for the USI on the student's behalf.</li> <li>• Applicants complete the Course Application Form and submit it to the Benchmark College representative they have met with or bring it into the College with a copy of their Photo Identification and other documentation as required to support their application (e.g. Concession and/ or Citizenship evidence, Visa). If they are applying for credit transfer or recognition, they also need to include relevant evidence as necessary, e.g. copies of relevant qualifications/statements of attainment and transcripts and verification consent form.</li> <li>• For VET Student Loans, separate application requirements apply (refer to VET Student Loans – Student Entry Procedure).</li> </ul>
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Language, literacy and numeracy skills (LLN)</b>
	<p>Applicants complete a Pre-enrolment (LLN) quiz – this occurs at the time of application. The Pre-Enrolment Quiz has been developed to provide students, trainer/assessors and the training organisation with an understanding of the literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and contextualised knowledge and skills required when undertaking entry level training. For VET Student Loans, students may also be asked to complete the VETASSESS Test - Reading and Numeracy.</p>
<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Benchmark College Administration</b>
	<p>Benchmark College will process the application. Applicants are notified of acceptance into the course prior to course commencement. (Allow 3-5 business days for processing).</p> <p>A Notification of Enrolment will be issued to the student (expires approx. two months from date of issue) for Smart and Skilled funded students.</p>
<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Payment of Fees</b>
	<p>An invoice will be issued to the student for payment of fees (with the exception of VET Student Loans and fee exemptions). Applicants must pay the required fee prior to commencement of training or can pay a 20% deposit and enter into a payment plan. VET Student Loans is available to eligible Diploma applicants for approved courses only (refer to the Fees and Charges Policy and Procedures for more information).</p>
<b>Step 6</b>	<b>Enrolment</b>
	<p>Once the application has been processed and accepted, students complete the Enrolment form. The student will then be inducted into their training course. Students will be provided with further course information and learning resources for their course. Learning needs may also be identified and noted on the training plan at this stage.</p>