

PROCEDURE

PPMF | TAFESA | 38

Title

Strategic Management –TAFE SA Access & Equity Policy and Procedure

Contact Officer

Name

Susan O'Leary

Phone

(08) 8463 6339

Position Title

Principal Project Officer

Email Address

susan.o'leary@sa.gov.au

Table of Contents

1.	Purpose	3
2.	Outcomes	3
3.	Scope.....	3
4.	Background and Principals.....	3
4.1.	Background	3
4.2.	Principals.....	4
5.	Policy Context	4
6.	Definitions	5
6.1.	Access.....	5
6.2.	Disadvantage	5
6.3.	Discrimination.....	5
6.4.	Equity	5
6.5.	Harassment.....	5
6.6.	Inclusive Practice.....	6
6.7.	Racial Harassment	6
6.8.	Sexual Harassment	6
6.9.	Target Groups	6
7.	Supporting Documents.....	6
7.1.	Legislation	6
7.2.	State Policy and Plans.....	7
7.3.	Standards.....	7
7.4.	National VET Equity Policy	7
7.5.	Reports and Research.....	7
8.	Implementation	7
8.1.	The Chief Executive is responsible for.....	7

TAFE SA Procedures are issued under the TAFE SA Policy and Procedure Management Framework. They are binding on all TAFE SA employees.

- 8.2. Executive Directors and Directors are responsible for..... 8
- 8.3. General Managers are responsible for..... 8
- 8.4. The TAFE SA Access and Equity Committee is responsible for..... 9
- 8.5. TAFE SA Managers are responsible for..... 9
- 8.6. TAF ESA Employees 9
- 8.7. TAFE SA Students10
- 9. Other Related Documents..... 10
 - 9.1. Information, Guidelines, Plans & Procedures.....10
- 10. Approval.....10
- 11. Review 10

1. Purpose

The TAFE SA Access & Equity Policy establishes the basis from which TAFE SA can contribute to meeting the government's challenge to "Create a more flexible and responsive training system that ensures development opportunities are available to all South Australians, especially those most disadvantaged in the workforce."¹ This policy supports the implementation of the SA Government's social inclusion goals: reduce poverty, support lifelong learning, increase access to education and training, increase employment and build social capacity. TAFE SA recognises that the achievement of equal employment opportunities and equal educational outcomes is dependent on the provision of a safe and inclusive teaching and learning environment that is free from discrimination and harassment.

2. Outcomes

The TAFE SA Access and Equity policy aims to:

- focus on increasing the inclusiveness of our systems and structures to ensure that they meet the needs of all actual and potential students;
- target strategies, both state wide and in response to local need, aimed at improving the participation and outcomes for groups experiencing institutional disadvantage and unequal educational outcomes.
- promote a working and learning environment free of harassment, bullying and discrimination and in which all employees and students feel empowered to resolve complaints and are able to access a transparent and supportive resolution process.

3. Scope

This policy provides a basis for the development of an equity strategy for TAFE SA that incorporates a focus on continuous improvement in the development of inclusive systems. This systems approach means that all TAFE SA systems, practices, programs, staff and students are within scope of this policy.

4. Background and Principals

4.1. Background

Four Access and Equity policies were promulgated for TAFE in 1994 by the then DETAFE Unit. A specific Disability Policy was added to the suite of policies in 2002, as part of the development of Disability Action Plans for all of the TAFE institutes. In 2002 the policies were adopted, with minor wording changes, by each of the 8 institutes of TAFE under their own quality systems.

The policies are:

- Access & Equity Policy
- Anti-Racism Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Policy
- Disability Policy

In mid -2004 the TAFE SA Access & Equity Committee undertook a major review of all Access & Equity policies for TAFE SA in light of significant policy and structural changes to the TAFE, VET and

¹ South Australia Strategic Plan: Creating Opportunity, 2004

government contexts in the 11 years since most of the original policies were written. This policy is the result of that review.

4.2. Principals

- 4.2.1** Developing and continuously improving a teaching and learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all potential learners including ensuring an environment free from harassment and discrimination.
- 4.2.2** Developing a system wide approach that makes equity a core organising principle of TAFE business. Senior management in TAFE SA will take high levels of ownership and leadership of the implementation of equity.
- 4.2.3** Focussing on systemic change to improve inclusive practices that act to better serve all students both actual and potential.
- 4.2.4** Acknowledging that a significant number of people continue to experience discrimination and disadvantage in the community. This includes a focus on specific and relevant intervention strategies for groups experiencing the highest levels of disadvantage due to complex intersecting issues such as membership of multiple target equity groups, low socio-economic-status (SES), locational disadvantage, long-term unemployment and poor education, training and employment outcomes.
- 4.2.5** Acknowledging diversity in the disadvantaged groups may need a variety of strategies to improve access and equity.
- 4.2.6** Supporting a combination of state-wide strategies to address common systemic barriers across TAFE SA along with the development of strategies that consider equity in the context of the local community.
- 4.2.7** Contributing to and playing an active role in whole-of-Government approaches to improve access and equity in vocational education and training.
- 4.2.8** Providing professional development for staff that supports their commitment, and continues to improve their flexibility of approach, to implement equity strategies and to work from a position of inclusivity.
- 4.2.9** Acknowledging the role of TAFE as a community agent and facilitator by working more closely with partners in the community such as schools, community groups and industry to increase the range of accessible and supported pathways into training.
- 4.2.10** Improving the level of consultation and contribution to decision making by groups who are not currently well served by TAFE.

5. Policy Context

The relevant state and national policies, frameworks and standards and VET sector research reports listed in this document have all been promulgated since 1994. These documents reflect a national environment that sets out new major regulatory and equity plans; a state government environment that is committed to improving equity through a social inclusion platform; and a research environment that proposes more sophisticated analysis and approaches to achieving equity. A new approach to equity

policy and practice is required in TAFE SA. This policy sets out the basis from which TAFE SA can engage more effectively in equity work.

6. Definitions

6.1. Access

Access generally refers to the ability to enter training. Improving access might involve strategies such as improving physical access to a training venue; ensuring that selection criteria does not discriminate against learners; adapting marketing activities to encourage all learners, ensuring pathways are in place between school or community and training. Access issues form a sub-set within equity issues.²

6.2. Disadvantage

Disadvantage can be understood as poor outcomes across a range of social and economic indicators such as health, housing, education and training, employment, family and community support, experiences of crime including violence and levels of financial hardship. In general groups experiencing disadvantage in one area, for instance education and training, often experience disadvantage in a number of interrelated areas such as employment, housing and financial hardship. Disadvantage is often the result of institutionalised discrimination - practices and systems that operate to positively serve groups who fit the mainstream demographic profile, while not meeting the needs of others.

6.3. Discrimination

Unlawful discrimination occurs when a person or group of people are treated less favourably than others because of characteristics held by that person or group of people and that treatment breaches either South Australian or Commonwealth legislation. Unlawful discrimination can be direct (treating someone less favourably because of a characteristic) or indirect (organisational policy or practice where a requirement that applies to all has the effect of disadvantaging a person or group of people because of a characteristic). Characteristics covered by Equal Opportunity law relating to students are race, sex, marital status, physical or intellectual impairment, age, sexuality and pregnancy. Under Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation characteristics also include potential pregnancy & disability of a student's associates. See *the TAFE SA Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedures for guidance on prevention, resolution and redress for incidents of discrimination*.

6.4. Equity

Equity is a term used to cover issues relating to access to VET, participation in VET, and achievement of outcomes in VET. Equity issues cover a wide range of matters. Examples of equity strategies include providing a supportive learning environment; adjusting assessments to meet individual circumstances; implementing policies on fee reduction; developing and using inclusive training materials. Essentially, equity refers to the capacity for all learners to achieve results in training and to receive training in an inclusive environment with inclusive materials. Inclusive environments and materials acknowledge and value the differences between people and cultures; they include rather than exclude.³

6.5. Harassment

Harassment is a form of discrimination and includes behaviour such as ridicule, jokes, invasion of personal space, attacks on property, verbal abuse and threats directed at a person or group of people

² Definition from Working With Diversity: a guide to equity and the AQTF

³ Definition from Working With Diversity: a guide to equity and the AQTF

because of any of the characteristics covered under State and Commonwealth Equal Opportunity Law. Some behaviours such as assault and inciting others to hateful acts based on race (racial vilification) are also criminal acts and may become the subject of police proceedings. *See the TAFE SA Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedures for guidance on prevention, resolution and redress for incidents of harassment.*

6.6. Inclusive Practice

Inclusive practice relates to providing teaching and learning opportunities and experiences, which are free from barriers and bias, and are developed to be flexible to suit individual learning styles and preferences as well as individual needs. Practices that are developed in consultation with equity target groups and/or in anticipation of variation in needs will be inclusive of a wider range of students. Designing administrative systems, curriculum, delivery plans, assessments and support services with **all** students in mind will likely result in flexible and adaptable processes that meet the needs of a wider range of students.

6.7. Racial Harassment

Racial harassment is the expression of attitudes or behaviour based on false assumptions or social myths of superiority of one race or culture over another. Examples of racial prejudice or harassment may include name calling, racist graffiti, demeaning jokes concerning a person's racial ethnic background and, in extreme cases, physical assault. *See the TAFE SA Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedures for guidance on prevention, resolution and redress for incidents of racial harassment.*

6.8. Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment occurs where a student or employee is subjected to imposed behaviour that is sexual in nature and where a reasonable person would anticipate that the recipient of the behaviour would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment covers a very broad range of behaviours and while not confined to a particular gender or sexuality it is most often used as a form of sexist harassment against women and homophobic harassment against people who are lesbian, bisexual, transgender or gay (LBTG). Behaviour that is considered Sexual Harassment may include but is not limited to: wolf whistles, leering, sexually offensive text and email messages, sexual jokes, imposed physical contact, and comments of a sexually violent nature. Some behaviours such as sexual assault, stalking, obscene letters/emails/text messages are also criminal offences and may be the subject of police proceedings. *See the TAFE SA Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedures for guidance on prevention, resolution and redress for incidents of sexual harassment.*

6.9. Target Groups

Target groups include women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with disability, youth at risk, mature aged workers; people living in locationally disadvantaged communities (including under serviced, isolated and rural communities) and emerging groups as may be identified by future development of social policy (see attachment for further information on the socio-economic position, relevant to training, for each of these groups).

7. Supporting Documents

7.1. Legislation

- [Public Sector Management Act \(SA\) 1995](#)
- [Technical And Further Education Act \(SA\) 1975](#)

- Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act (SA) 1986
- Equal Opportunity Act (SA) 1984
- Sex Discrimination Act (C'wlth) 1984
- Racial Discrimination Act (C'wlth) 1975
- Disability Discrimination Act (C'wlth) 1992
- [Racial Vilification Act \(SA\) 1996](#)
- Age Discrimination Act (C'wlth) 2004
- Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission Act (C'wlth) 1986

7.2. State Policy and Plans

- [South Australia's Strategic Plan](#)
- [New Times, New Ways, New Skills - SA Workforce 2010](#)
- Doing it Right - The SA Governments Commitment to Aboriginal Families and Communities
- Making the Connections: The SA Government's Action Strategy to keep young people connected to learning and opportunities
- DFEEST Strategic Plan

7.3. Standards

- [Australian Quality Training Framework \(AQTF\)](#)
- [Disability Education Standards](#)
- The Education Standards for Overseas Students Framework

7.4. National VET Equity Policy

- [Women Shaping Our Future](#)
- [Bridging Pathways - National Strategy for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in VET](#)
- [Partners in a Learning Culture - National Strategy for increasing opportunities for Indigenous people in VET](#)

7.5. Reports and Research

- Review of TAFE Governance - Report
- Skills for the Future Inquiry – Report
- Client Student Voice Action Group Consultation Report 2006
- Equity in the Learning Society: rethinking equity strategies for post-compulsory education and training (2000)
- Understanding Equity Strategies of Training Providers (2004)
- Equity in VET Research Readings (2004)
- Working with Diversity: A Guide to Equity and the AQTF (2004)

8. Implementation

Implementation procedures describe responsibilities of all staff and students in supporting this policy.

8.1. The Chief Executive is responsible for

- Ensuring that Access & Equity goals inform strategic planning for TAFE SA
- Ensuring the principles of Access & Equity inform decision making for TAFE SA Executive
- Ensuring an equity strategy is developed to implement the policy for TAFE SA

- Ensuring appropriate consideration of this policy when making resource decisions
- Ensuring all departmental policies and procedures are non-discriminatory

8.2. Executive Directors and Directors are responsible for

- Ensuring that Access & Equity goals inform strategic planning for TAFE SA
- Ensuring the principles of Access & Equity inform decision making for TAFE SA Executive
- Leading the implementation of and ensuring compliance with an equity strategy for TAFE SA aimed at identifying and addressing barriers to access, participation and achievement;
- Ensuring appropriate consideration of this policy when making resource decisions
- Ensuring all institute policies and procedures are non-discriminatory;
- Ensuring consultation and participation in decision-making by equity target groups in each Institute on policies, procedures and associated practices in order to improve services and facilities
- Ensuring the TAFE SA Access & Equity policy is widely promulgated and understood and regularly reviewed
- Ensuring that all staff are provided with information and training about access and equity issues and the department's complaint resolution process

8.3. General Managers are responsible for

- Ensuring inclusion of equity strategy goals in educational delivery
- Ensuring inclusion of Disability Action Plan goals in educational delivery
- Jointly developing mechanism with Access & Equity Managers to consult on implementation of the equity strategy across programs
- Working with institute Access & Equity Manager and Quality Manager and relevant Quality Assurance Groups on strategies to incorporate inclusive methodologies into program practice.
- Fostering stronger relationships with secondary education and employers to create more opportunities and pathways between education, training and employment

8.4. The TAFE SA Access and Equity Committee is responsible for

- Monitoring and reporting to TAFE SA Executive on implementation of the Equity Strategy.
- Providing Institutes with compliance advice regarding Commonwealth and State Legislation and regulations, focussing on Equity, Equal Opportunity and Discrimination including the Disability Discrimination Act;
- Sponsoring the development of TAFE SA Access & Equity policies, strategies and projects aimed at improving inclusive practices throughout TAFE SA;
- Providing a leadership role to address access and equity professional development needs across TAFE SA;
- Providing input to consultations relating to national and state access & equity policies and strategic directions from the perspective of TAFE SA
- Providing advice on the implementation of national VET equity policies;
- Developing resources to inform, support and guide staff and students in implementing the Access & Equity Policy and on the TAFE SA Student Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedure;
- Providing advice to Institutes on the best ways to facilitate consultation with students from equity target groups to monitor their experiences in TAFE SA;

8.5. TAFE SA Managers are responsible for

All managers are responsible for their work group's commitments and actions in relation to the equity strategy including:

- Ensuring inclusion of Disability Action Plan goals in workgroup practices. Mapping profile of the current student group in own Educational Program and developing strategies to broaden this profile to increase participation of disadvantaged groups
- Supporting professional development for all staff in equity skills and knowledge
- Ensuring service provision to students is delivered in an inclusive, equitable and sensitive manner
- Recognising and supporting staff time spent on providing individual support/counselling to students
- Seeking to develop partnerships with community and industry to create programs and pathways for disadvantaged groups in the local area
- Identifying staff who will take responsibility for coordinating opportunities to work with community and industry partners to provide tailored programs and entry points for disadvantaged groups
- Creating an environment which encourages people with disability to disclose any disabling barriers to their learning in order for the Institute to support learners to reach their greatest potential
- Taking early action to prevent and resolve complaints of discrimination or harassment in accordance with the TAFE SA Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedure
- Ensuring all staff and students are provided with information about access and equity issues and the department's complaint resolution process

8.6. TAFE SA Employees

All employees have a responsibility to:

- be familiar with and understand this policy and the TAFE SA Student Complaint Resolution Policy & Procedures and be willing and able to assist students to access and use the procedures.
- work towards the implementation of the Equity Strategy for TAFE through participating in the development of equity strategies for their workgroup
- to participate in equity related professional development activities to increase their knowledge and skills in inclusive practice and in continuously improving the practise of these skills.
- provide services to students in a way that aims to include and serve the diverse range of students that make up the TAFE student body
- challenge and, where appropriate, assist in resolving discriminatory or harassing behaviour from either staff or students in accordance with the TAFE SA Complaint Resolution Procedure

- take early action to prevent and resolve incidents of harassment in the classroom environment, including strategies to increase student understanding of harassment and discrimination, in accordance with the TAFE SA Student Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedure.

8.7. TAFE SA Students

Students are responsible for

- behaving in a courteous and non-discriminatory manner when interacting with other students, staff and members of the public.
- speaking up when they need assistance to access resources or require adjustments to the way they are studying.

Students are also encouraged to speak up about issues that affect them including promptly lodging complaints to resolve issues of harassment from other students or staff or discriminatory practices within the Institute.

9. Other Related Documents

- TAFE SA Student Complaint Resolution Policy and Procedure

9.1. Information, Guidelines, Plans & Procedures

- TAFE SA Equity Strategy
- Access & Equity policy – précis sheet
- Disability Action Plans
- Discrimination and Harassment – fact sheet
- Guide for TAFE students with Disability
- Guide for TAFE staff on working with students with disability
- TAFE SA Student Behaviour Management Guidelines

10. Approval

This policy is issued under the authority of the Chief Executive of the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology.

11. Review

This policy will remain in force for a period of 2 years from the date of approval and will be reviewed by the TAFE SA Access and Equity Committee before the expiration date.

ATTACHMENT 1

Socio Economic Circumstances of Target Equity Groups

Below is a description of the socio-economic circumstances, relevant to education and training, of each of the broad target equity groups that TAFE SA is committed to better serving:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: the range of issues that impact on Indigenous participation in education and training are well documented. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been systematically dispossessed of their lands, families and cultures and at the same time denied a fair share of society's valued resources such as education and employment. Indigenous people also continue to experience institutionalised racial discrimination and harassment in the general community and in education and training. These factors have resulted in lower participation rates in education and training, poor educational attainment and high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Poor levels of health, housing and interactions with the justice system are related issues that affect both education and employment outcomes for Indigenous people. While the percentage of Indigenous people participating in VET is now higher than the percentage of non-Indigenous participation Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander student numbers are still concentrated in low level courses. Indigenous students face language, literacy and numeracy issues - in 2001 in SA 17% of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people spoke an Indigenous language at home. The poor employment outcomes for Indigenous students are linked not only to discriminatory employment practices but also to a lack of economic self-determination especially in Indigenous communities.

As a role model for employment practices TAFE suffers from a lack of an Indigenous presence in all areas. The informal skills developed by the many Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people who provide a range of services within their own communities go largely unrecognised through a lack of access to culturally appropriate RPL processes. There is a strong call for more consultation, collaboration and shared decision making about policy, planning, resources and delivery between TAFE and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people at all levels to ensure appropriate and relevant success measures for Indigenous students, the development of more culturally appropriate and flexibly delivered training models and the development of appropriate support mechanisms for indigenous students undertaking mainstream TAFE courses.

Locationally Disadvantaged Communities (including rural and remote): This category includes issues facing many rural and remote communities as well as the emerging acknowledgement of metropolitan 'disadvantaged communities' – for example those under serviced, low-socio economic communities with high levels of unemployment, low education levels, high crime rates and poor health. Persistent issues broadly facing rural and remote communities are lack of access to physical infrastructure; lack of access to information and communication technology infrastructure; lack of access to transport; and lack of local employment opportunities. However these are not universal issues in rural areas. Taken broadly students in remote and rural areas are participating and achieving equitable (or better) outcomes than those students in capital cities and metropolitan areas. It is in some rural communities, towns and locations in which issues of disadvantage persist. There is a need for VET data collections to include socio-economic indicators, which may highlight specific rural and remote communities as well as specific metropolitan communities as suffering from locational disadvantage and requiring focussed equity strategies.⁴

⁴ Equity in VET Research Readings, NCVET, 2004

Mature Aged Workers: People aged between 45 and 64 are disadvantaged in employment and the issues they face have implications for VET provision. The profile of those particularly disadvantaged is - unemployed; not officially in the labour market but want to work, who have no education past year 10; those employed but underemployed and low skilled or are at risk of unemployment because they are in an unskilled job and have low educational attainment. An estimated 30% of older workers face multiple barriers of low levels of educational attainment; poor skills currency; poor understanding of the labour market and related employment opportunities; age discrimination including cultural norms about retirement age; health, relationship, financial and other non-vocational issues.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD): In the 2001 census, 16% of the population (2.8 million people) spoke a language other than English at home, an increase of 8% since 1996. 18.4% of these people either did not speak English well, or did not speak English at all. Of VET graduates in 2001 non-English speaking background (NESB) students experienced lower levels of employment (16.4% unemployed) than English speaking background graduates (9.9% unemployed). CALD students are concentrated at the top end (diploma) and bottom end (Cert 1 and 2) of VET courses. Disadvantage is not a universal experience for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds. Specific groups (such as refugees and temporary protection visa holders) and people who have specific characteristics/experiences (such as those of low socio-economic status and those who are also members of other target equity groups) tend to experience higher levels of educational and employment disadvantage.

People with Disability: Participation levels in VET for people with disability are low and when they do participate they are concentrated in low-level courses. There is a lack of coherent and supported pathways from school to further education and training for students with disability and they are more likely to leave school before year 10. The consequent need for entry level courses that include numeracy and literacy is high while the availability of Certificate 1 courses has dwindled. Students with disability also experience a lack of understanding of and support with the RPL process and indicate low satisfaction levels with their VET experience. People with disability experience extremely poor employment outcomes.

Women: Women are concentrated in highly gender segmented career pathways and experience higher levels of contingent employment, low paid employment in 'feminised' industries, lower levels of employment in professional or para professional positions, even with high qualification levels, and experience limited support from employers for ongoing training⁵. Women also lack access to apprenticeships and traineeships that lead to secure employment. Many women lack knowledge of RPL processes and there is little or no targeted information or encouragement to women to have their informal and transferable life skills recognised in this way. There is a lack of information and advice within VET that is targeted, relevant and available in an ongoing way to women at various life stages and interactions with training. The burden of the majority of family/caring responsibilities still falls to women who experience further barriers to training through a lack of accessible and affordable childcare. Similar to CALD and Rural groups it is those women who experience intersecting forms of disadvantage who experience higher levels of educational and subsequent employment disadvantage.

Youth At Risk: Young people who are likely to leave school early and not go onto other forms of education or training or into secure employment are considered socially 'at risk' in a multitude of ways. Often 'at risk' young people face multiple life problems such as dysfunctional family settings, homelessness, drug addiction, mental health issues and may have such adult responsibilities as managing their own household, parenting or caring for other family members. They also have lower literacy and numeracy skills; face a lifetime income disadvantage; have an unemployment risk three times greater than school completers; have poorer health, consumer choices & social participation⁶. Increasingly

⁵ 'Women in VET', Equity Research Centre, 2002

⁶ 'Learning, Earning and Young People: the tipping point' - presentation by John Spierings, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, August 2004

TAFE is the second chance education option for early school leavers but in 2002 only 50% of the 15 to 19 age group in the TAFE system successfully completed their studies⁷.

⁷'How Young People Faring', Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2003