Access and Equity Policy

Policy Category	**Policy**/guideline/procedure/rules		
Review	3 years from date of Approval		
Policy Code	AP004		
Contacts	policy@imc.edu.au		
Version	**Approval Authority**	**Approval Date**	**Commencement Date**
2022.08	Academic Board	25 August 2022	25 August 2022

1 Purpose

The Institute values diversity in its student population. The Institute provides equal opportunity for access, participation and completion for all students. The Institute provides equivalent opportunities for access and success for student equity groups, including First Nations students.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles that underpin the consideration and development of procedures that enable the Institute to meet the learning and support needs of all students and enable them an equal chance of success. Principles and procedures in this policy are informed by legal obligations and requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.*

2 Scope

This Policy applies to all staff and students at the Institute, including those at campuses within Australia and offshore. This Policy applies to both prospective and current students.

3 Definitions

Adjustments mean the measures taken to enable equitable access and participation in education to support student equity groups.

Diversity means the mix of students from different backgrounds and with different personal circumstances.

Equity means a measure of achievement, fairness and opportunity in education.

Equity groups include students that:

- are from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB);
- have a disability;
- are women in non-traditional areas;
- identify as Indigenous;
- are from low SES (socioeconomic status) locations; and
- are from regional and remote locations (www.dese.gov.au)

There may be equity groups other than those listed above. Ongoing monitoring will determine the inclusion of additional equity categories

First Nations students means students who identify as Indigenous Australians, and/or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Inclusion means promoting diversity and creating an environment where all students have equal opportunities for participation and success.

4   Procedures

4.1 Access and Equity Principles
The following principles are applied to all educational practices and procedures at the Institute:

- Each student has equivalent opportunity to access, participate and achieve outcomes regardless of age, race, colour, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status or disability.

- Processes are fair, valid, reliable and consistent in relation to entry, recognition and progression through a unit or course.

- Learning and Teaching activities accommodate diversity and create opportunities for equivalent academic success for all students, and in particular for student equity groups.

- Specific consideration is given to the recruitment and support of First Nations students.

The Institute's documents and publications promote inclusion.

- Students have the right to appeal a **needs assessment** or **recognition decision**. Grievances and appeals are addressed through an appropriate structure in a fair and equitable manner. Information regarding appeals and grievances for both future students and current students is available on the Institute's website. Further details are provided in the *Student Grievance and Appeals Policy.*

4.2 Legal obligations

The Institute's procedures for ensuring access and equity comply with requirements of Commonwealth and State legislation and in particular the requirements imposed by
- *Disability Standards for Education* 2005 (Cth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act* 1992 (Cth)
- *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act* 1986 (Cth)
- *Age Discrimination Act* 2004 (Cth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act* 1975 (Cth)
- *Workplace Gender Equality Act* 2012 (Cth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 (Cth)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)*

4.3 Student Recruitment

Recruitment practices, including marketing material and website information, must use inclusive language and encourage prospective students from diverse backgrounds.

`

Information on access, equity, inclusion and diversity must be provided to students at the time of recruitment and prior to admission. This includes:

a) *First Nations peoples* - This group is to be given particular consideration. The Institute's website shall provide information on special entry programs including its "Indigenous Entry Program". Prospective students should also be made aware of the provision of specific support services and monitoring of their progress. The Student Handbook shall also provide information on particular support offered to First Nations students.

b) *Disability* - *Section 22 of the Disability Discrimination Act* applies specifically to education providers. It prohibits discrimination against a person on the grounds of a person's disability. Further, *Disability Standards for Education* imposes obligations to make 'reasonable adjustments' and to take 'reasonable steps' to enable students with disability to apply for admission, participate in a course and use facilities on the same basis as a student without a disability.

c) *Equity Groups* – The Institute will identify particular student sub-groups as being at a disadvantage and/or part of an under-represented group. Students from these groups will be monitored and, where necessary, offered specific support to encourage and ensure their participation, progress and success.

d) *International students* - This group is not considered an equity group at the Institute as it is generally not under-represented in recruitment and admission. However, the Institute will employ practices that recognise international students as diverse learners. The Student Handbook shall contain information regarding the provision of support specific to the needs of international students

e) *Alternative admission schemes* - The *Selection and Admission Policy* provides information on alternative admission schemes that are aimed at encouraging diversity. The Academic Board will consider and makes decisions on admission of students via an alternative admission scheme.

f) *Scholarships* – The Institute offers scholarships for both domestic and international students in order to support those in need. The Institute's website provides information on eligibility and how to apply for scholarships.

4.4 Admission

The Institute's *Student Selection and Admission Policy* outlines the procedures employed in the admission of students. These include:

- *Provision of information* - Prior to the acceptance of an offer of admission, students must have access to all information that may have an impact on their decision to accept an offer of admission. Students with special needs must have access to specific information regarding the accommodation of their needs, resources and support services.

- *Identification of personal needs and circumstances* - It is the responsibility of prospective students to disclose any particular personal needs prior to admission, when requested. Students may be asked to provide documentation to confirm their special needs.

- *Negotiation of adjustments* - Students who identify needs that require adjustments will be consulted in the process of determining any adjustments. The Institute will provide reasonable adjustments within the scope of its operations.

- *Academic standards* - 'Reasonable adjustments' will be made to accommodate students' needs. However, the Institute will not compromise the academic integrity of a qualification or the achievement of learning outcomes.

- *Admission arrangements* – Students who have been assessed as requiring adjustments will be informed in writing of these. Institute staff will also be informed of adjustments required for particular students enrolled in courses and units. All adjustments will be monitored regularly in consultation with individual students to ensure their needs are being met.

4.5 Participation, Progression and Completion

The Institute ensures students have equivalent opportunities to participate in learning and other activities, to progress and successfully complete their studies. Strategies employed to ensure equivalence will be guided by individual needs and circumstances, but, as a general rule, will include the following:

- *Course design and delivery* – Staff have a responsibility to take into account diversity and equity in planning and delivering courses and units. Language, materials and activities must encourage inclusion. The curriculum and course design should be flexible and adaptable to cater for the range of individual student needs. Unit lecturers and Academic Administration staff have a responsibility to support student equity groups

- *Support services* – Student support services provide support for both the educational and welfare needs of students. The Student Handbook provides information on a wide range of support services.

- *Resources and facilities* - All students are provided with access to resources. Physical adjustments should be provided wherever necessary, including appropriate timetabling and the use of adaptive technology.

- *Monitoring* –. The *Student Progression, Exclusion and Graduation Policy* provides detail on the staff responsibilities for monitoring, recording and provision of feedback to student equity groups.

- ***Responsibilities*** – The Academic Board oversees practices promoting access and equity and considers the success of practices as part of its regular reviews.

5   Related Policies:
  i.   Student Grievance and Appeals Policy
  ii. Student Selection and Admission Policy
  iii. Student Progression, Exclusion and Graduation Policy

6   Version Control

Historical Version	Approved by	Approval Date
2022.08	Academic Board	14 August 2019
2016.08	Academic Board	15 August 2016
2013.12	Academic Board	19 December 2013