

Access and Equity Policy

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| Contacts | policy@imc.edu.au | | |
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1 Purpose

The Institute strives to provide equal opportunity of access, participation and completion regardless of students’ backgrounds. The Institute values diversity in its student population. Emphasis is placed on the provision of equivalent opportunities for access and success for historically disadvantaged and under-represented student populations. Specific consideration is given to the recruitment and admission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In supporting equity, The Institute ensures that the pursuit of free intellectual inquiry and freedom of expression is not compromised.

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 all students to have equal chance of success. The policy outlines procedures that are key to the accommodation of diversity including: student recruitment, access to information, resourcing and support services and monitoring of student progress and completion. Principles and procedures in this policy are informed by legal obligation 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 both within Australia and Offshore. This Policy includes both prospective and current students.

3 Definitions

Adjustments are the measures made to enable equitable access and participation in education, and when these measures are adopted, students have an equal chance to achieve outcomes regardless of their background and personal circumstances.

Diversity for the purposes of this Policy is the mix of students from different backgrounds and with different personal circumstances.

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

Inclusion is the act of welcoming diversity and creating an environment where students have equal opportunities.

4 Procedures

4.1 Access and Equity Principles

The following principles are applied in the development and implementation of all learning and assessment strategies and the processes by which students are supported in their enrolment and progression.

- The Institute's practices ensure that each individual 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 physical or intellectual disability.
- Processes are fair, valid, reliable and consistent in relation to entry, recognition and progression through a unit or course.
- Teaching and Learning activities accommodate diversity and create opportunities for equivalent academic success, including those students identified as being at a disadvantage and/or part of an under-represented group.
- Specific consideration is given to the recruitment and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Inclusivity is incorporated and maintained in documentation and materials including those related to admission, course design, support services, resources and infrastructure.
- 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. Laws and guidelines related to access and equity are available from the Acts below.

Commonwealth legislation

- Disability Standards for Education (2005)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984

States/Territories

Each State and Territory has relevant Acts that relate to discrimination, disability and/or equal opportunity.

Overseas

Relevant Legislation of the local jurisdiction of offshore campuses.

4.3 Student Recruitment

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

Staff involved with student recruitment activities must consider The Institute’s stance on access and diversity and act accordingly. They must also ensure that prospective students are provided with information that may be relevant to their admission and future participation and achievement.

Key information that must be made available to students at the time of recruitment and prior to admission, includes the following:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 indigenous students.
- Disability*** - *Section 22 of the Disability Discrimination Act* applies specifically to education. 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.
- 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.

These sub-groups may be based upon conditions arising from:

- low socio-economic background;
- disability;
- remote, rural or isolated areas;
- first in family to attend higher education;
- non-English speaking background; and
- women in an under-represented area of study.

There may be equity groups other than those listed above. Ongoing monitoring will consider other groups that could possibly be at a disadvantage in particular courses at The Institute.

- d) **International students** - This group is not considered an equity group as they are generally not under-represented at The Institute. However, The Institute will have 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* will provide information on alternative admission schemes that are aimed at encouraging diversity. The Academic Board will consider and makes decisions on admission of students via the Alternative Admission Scheme.
- f) **Scholarships** – The Institute will offer scholarships for both domestic and international students in order to support those in need. Examples of scholarships are that may be offered are to students from rural areas, mature age students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Institute’s website will contain information on eligibility and how to apply for scholarships.

4.4 Admission

The Institute’s *Student Selection and Admission Policy* outlines the Procedures involved in admission of students. Key features of that policy that are most relevant to this policy include:

- **Provision of information** - Prior to the acceptance of an offer of admission, students must have access to all information that may impact their decision to accept an offer of admission. Students with special needs must have access to specific information regarding the accommodation of their needs. Information that should be provided includes detail that may assist in planning for and participation in educational activities, as well as particulars on the availability of educational resources including support services.
- **Identification of personal needs and circumstances** - Prospective students will be asked to identify the existence of personal needs/circumstances for which they may require additional support. It is the responsibility of students to disclose needs prior to admission and they may be asked to provide documentation to confirm their special needs.
- **Negotiation of adjustments** - Students who identify needs that require adjustments will be involved in the determination of the adjustments. Although The Institute has obligations to admit and support students with needs, there are reasonable limitations on adjustments that can be made due to the scope of The Institute’s operations. The Institute has a responsibility to ensure that at the time of admission there are no known limitations on students that may impede participation and their ability to succeed.
- **Academic standards** - ‘Reasonable adjustments’ will be made to accommodate needs but it must be noted that The Institute will not compromise the academic integrity of the qualification or the achievement of learning outcomes. In particular, any adjustment to

assessment must involve finding alternative strategies, not exempting/excluding students from assessment tasks or the achievement of learning outcomes.

- **Admission arrangements** – Student admissions that include special requirements will be communicated in writing to students and relevant staff. Continued monitoring and documenting regarding these arrangements will be monitored.

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 inclusivity. 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 for safeguarding students in need of special assistance and ensuring they are appropriately counselled and supported when necessary.
- **Support services** – Student support services will be informed of individual student cohorts and will provide support for both educational and welfare needs. The Student Handbook will provide information on a wide range of support services including: learning support for students with special needs; support for welfare needs such as mental health; access to individual counselling services; links to associations that provide support to particular groups such as cultural and religious groups, international students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- **Resources and facilities** - All students must be provided with access to resources. Physical adjustments should be provided wherever possible. For example, barriers to access may be removed by scheduling classes in ground floor rooms and using adaptive technology where possible.
- **Monitoring** – A key aspect to providing and maintaining access and equity is data gathering and monitoring of the participation, progression and completion of students including those with needs and/or those recognised as belonging to identified equity groups. The *Student Progression, Exclusion and Graduation Policy* provides detail on the specific staff responsibilities for monitoring, recording and provision of feedback. Ultimately, the Dean has responsibility for overseeing processes for monitoring student progress, recording student progression, reviewing data and implementing improvements. In addition, Unit Lecturers and Academic Administrative staff are responsible for supporting students in need of special assistance and keeping accurate records of their progression and completion.
- **Responsibilities** - Academic Board oversees practices enabling access and equity and considers the success of practices as part of its regular reviews. Academic Board will report to The Institute's Council on its endeavours in achieving access and equity.

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 |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 2016.08 | Academic Board | 15 August 2016 |
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