Access & Equity Policy

Purpose
This policy describes how ICAT aims to provide an accessible and inclusive learning environment that promotes fairness, equity, respect for social and cultural diversity, and is free from discrimination and harassment.

Scope of Procedure
This policy applies to all students enrolled in a course of study at ICAT, and the staff who are involved in the associated teaching, academic skills, and administrative activities.

Related Policies
This policy should be read in conjunction with the following college policies:
- Admissions Policies
- Misconduct Policy
- Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- Monitoring Academic Progression Policy
- Complaints & Appeals Policy

All documents referenced in this policy can be accessed via the Forms & Policies section on the college website.

Related Legislation
This framework considers the following legislation:
- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (VIC)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (QLD)

Principles
ICAT is committed to diversity, access, and equity a where age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability, sexuality, language skills, literacy or numeracy level, or unemployment is not a barrier to access, participation, and the achievement of learning outcomes:
- Ensuring all students are treated with equity and able to participate in tertiary study and engage with the college community.
- Ensuring the learning, social and cultural environment supports the participation of all staff and students including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, those with physical disability or mental health issues, and those experiencing disadvantage.

- Ensuring the academic support needs of all students are met so that they all have equal opportunity for the achievement of academic progression and course requirements.
- Facilitating a fair and inclusive environment where unlawful discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying, or victimisation is not tolerated.
- Protecting the rights of gender equality.
- Respecting and valuing diversity.

ICAT complies with and promotes its responsibilities with all relevant laws and regulations.

Access & Equity Programs

Admissions

Selection is undertaken in a fair and transparent manner, based on a demonstration of ability to successfully participate in the study program and the completion of any prerequisites that may apply to a course or subject or unit of study. This is demonstrated through interview. Students are not compromised on social, cultural, language, literacy, sex, religious, physical, or other status. ICAT has equal benefits and opportunities processes.

ICAT is committed to student diversity and encourages applications from people who:
- Are from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Are from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Have special needs
- Wish to return to study after an interruption for family responsibilities
- Are considering a career change

For more information on admission criteria and the process of admission, please refer to the college *Admissions Policy for Domestic Students*, the *Admissions Policy for International Students,* and the *Course Specific Information Sets*.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may include those with autistic spectrum disorder; visual, hearing, speech, language, physical, intellectual, or multiple impairments. These conditions affect students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

ICAT can assist students with impairments to meet a range of individual educational goals both within and outside the criteria and standards. It is important to take meaningful, transparent, and reasonable steps to consult, consider and implement reasonable adjustments for students with disability. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments may be applied to the assessment processes to consider the individual student's needs. This assistance is both within and outside of the assessment criteria and standards. For provision of assessment adjustment, this policy must be read in conjunction with the Institute's *Reasonable Adjustment* and *Assessment* policies.

Lecturers may accept other forms of evidence that meet the requirements of the course, principles of assessment and rules of evidence, and modify assessments to accommodate greater access and equity for students participating in the program. More information is provided in the college *Reasonable Adjustment Policy*.

During the process of admission, it is a student's responsibility to declare and communicate their disability, to ensure ICAT can put in place provisions for their support and success. ICAT will deal with the student's circumstances, and privacy concerns with discretion and confidentiality. For provision of support and adjustments, this policy must be read in conjunction with the Institute's *Reasonable Adjustment Policy.*

Safe Environment

Every member of the ICAT community must be able to pursue their activities in an atmosphere based on mutual respect and dignity for all. Harassment, bullying and violence of any nature are unacceptable, unlawful, and contrary to a safe environment for learning and working.

ICAT takes all complaints of harassment, bullying or intimidating behaviour seriously and follow a four-stage resolution process as prescribed in the *Complaints & Appeals Policy*. All people belonging to the ICAT community are responsible for actively intervening to prevent harassment, bullying or intimidating behaviour. Everyone has a responsibility to not engage in or encourage harassment or discrimination.

ICAT will report all criminal acts committed to the relevant authorities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework

The Institute of Creative Arts and Technology (ICAT) acknowledges the need for providing equivalent opportunities for all its students, regardless of their background, to support their academic success. As part of ICAT's commitment to equity and access, this Framework outlines the considerations provided to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This Framework is an extension of ICAT's Student Access and Equity Policy which embeds principles of diversity, access and equity across ICAT practices, systems and approaches. The Policy ensures students have every opportunity for success and that inclusion and accessibility is an integral component of the ICAT learning experience.

As an Institute of Higher Education, ICAT ensures it meets the requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, in particular:

- Section 2.2 on Diversity and Equity; specifically Standard 2.2.2 that requires that specific consideration is made on the participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- Standard 6.2.1.g that requires that policies and practises support the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and are sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

This Framework should be read in conjunction with the *Student Code of Conduct Policy*.

Objective

The Framework ensures that, as part of ICAT's diversity and equity commitment:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff are considered in ICAT policies, procedures, practices, and systems; and
- An inclusive and accessible environment is provided that supports academic success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Approach

ICAT applies the following principles in its approach towards the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff:

1. We commit to foster cultural knowledge and understanding
   a. Provide a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including students, staff and visitors.
   b. Offer training to staff and students on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands culture.
   c. Commit to the use of diverse imagery representation and the use of an acknowledgement of country in ICAT collateral and materials.
2. Nurture participation and completion
   a. Encourage the recruitment and admission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
   b. Provide equal opportunities for academic success.
   c. Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as part of the admissions process and apply individualised support strategies and adjustments as required.
   d. Offer tailored support and create an appropriate learning environment.
   e. Proactively monitor student participation and apply early interventions as necessary.
   f. ICAT has developed key policies, procedures that are integral to this Framework and which support diversity, access, and equity throughout the student lifecycle. These Policies and Procedures are available on the ICAT website, in the student handbook and via the staff intranet.

Evaluating Success

ICAT regularly monitors its approach towards promoting accessibility and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to evaluate its effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement.

The ICAT Student Management System and Learning Management System are designed to ensure analytics can be conducted based on student cohort demographic attributes, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

As part of the evaluation process, ICAT conducts benchmarking and external referencing to identify best practices in the sector.

Key reports are provided to relevant ICAT staff as well as governance committees, including the Academic Board and Corporate Board, with a specific focus on monitoring participation, progress, completion and outcomes achieved by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
The Academic Board and Corporate Board are ultimately responsible for the monitoring of participation, progress, completion and outcomes achieved by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The table below outlines the approach taken towards supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students throughout the student lifecycle and the reporting and monitoring in place to evaluate success. Further details on reporting are outlined in the ICAT Reporting Framework.

Stage	Approach	Monitoring/ Reporting	HESF
Recruitment	Publicly available information on student support, policies and procedures specific to equity and diversity. Clear and detailed information on course offerings and services that are easily understood. Opportunity for one-on-one consultation with the Recruitment team. Financial adjustments including scholarships to assist with access.	Regular review of recruitment procedures. Quality assurance of recruitment practises. Training of recruitment staff. Data reports on enquiries and conversion rates to application by student demographic cohort.	1.1.1 7.2

Admission	Provide equity adjustments which may increase an applicant's ranking for admission. Reserve places for people applying from an equity group. Identify additional academic preparation and/or English support and prepare a tailored support strategy.	Academic Board oversees and determines equity adjustments. Overall student cohort composition reported to Academic Board. Effectiveness of reasonable adjustments and support strategies reviewed by Teaching and Learning Committee. Data on admission including acceptance and rejection by student demographic attribute is reported to Academic Board.	1.1.1 1.1.3
Orientation	Send reminders to attend orientation. Provide a comprehensive orientation program that is tailored to the student cohort. Make available a student handbook that includes key information such as language and academic skills support. Ensure students have ongoing access to the information covered in the orientation program. Make available one-on-one orientations depending on individual student needs.	Monitor orientation Attendance and participation. Use of an orientation survey to collect feedback from students. Annual review of Orientation content. Report data on attendance and student feedback by student demographics to the Academic Board via Teaching and Learning Committee.	1.3.1 1.3.2c

Progression and Participation	Provide opportunities to access language and academic skills support.	Annual review of policies and procedures relating to progression and participation.	1.3.4
			1.3.5
	Ensure fair and reasonable allocation of resources.	The Director of Education monitors participation regularly and ensures that sufficient resources are allocated.	1.3.6
	Actively monitor student progression and participation.	Monitor student progression and participation by student demographic and report findings to the Teaching and Learning Committee.	
	Identify students likely to be at risk and apply early interventions.		
	Identify students at risk and apply support strategies.		
	Require facilitators to monitor student engagement and participation.	Use an evidence-based approach to identify strategies to support student progression and participation.	
	Make available student mentors and buddy systems.		
	Monitoring Academic Progression policy and procedure.		
Wellbeing and Safety	Provide training to staff relating to student wellbeing and safety.	Annual review of Work Health and Safety (WHS), Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) and Critical Incident policies.	2.3
	Embed wellbeing and safety information in student orientation and student handbook.	Review and analyse incidents reported relating to WHS, bullying and harassment, critical incidents.	

	Student support and facilitators reiterate the importance of student wellbeing practices. Clear instructions on how students can seek support or report incidents related to wellbeing and safety. Provide counselling services to students.	Seek feedback from students and staff regarding wellbeing and safety and available support. Report insights related to incidents and feedback to Academic Board and Corporate Board on a regular basis.	
Learning Resources and Educational Support	Access and equity issues are considered during the development of curriculum. Provide a mix of appropriate instructional and assessment modes. Pedagogy considerations and reasonable adjustments are proactively made. Learning resources do not present unexpected barriers, costs or technology requirements for students, including those with special needs. Provide appropriate student services, resources and infrastructure.	Conduct annual course and unit surface reviews. Consider performance and success data by student demographic attributes in Comprehensive Course Reviews. Monitor participation and appropriateness of student services, resources and infrastructure to ensure they meet student needs. Seek regular staff and student feedback on learning resources and education support, and report outcomes to the Academic Board.	1.3.2 1.3.3 1.3.6 2.1 3.1 3.3
Completion	Ensure completion of studies in accordance with the relevant policies. Set unit and course completion KPIs.	Track completion via Student Management System.	1.3

		Data reported by student demographic to the Academic Board and tracked against KPIs	
Feedback and Involvement	Clear processes for complaints and appeals are available for students and staff. Complaints and appeals are tracked and recorded. Embed student satisfaction surveys within the student lifecycle. Ensure student representation on the Academic Board and ad hoc committees/ working groups.	Student feedback used in continuous improvement initiatives, including curriculum review and reported to relevant committees including the Academic Board. Monitor effectiveness of feedback collection tools and opportunities. Themes and insights emerging from complaints and appeals are reported to the Academic Board. Student representative on the Academic Board reports on behalf of the student cohort including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	5.3.5

Change and Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Authored by	Approved by	Description
30042023	25 May 2023	QA Manager	Academic Board	Policy updated under new ownership, ATSI Framework incorporated

Policy Information

Author:	QA Manager
Policy owner:	Office of the Registrar
Approved by:	Academic Board
Approval date:	25/05/2023
Status:	Approved