

Diversity, Access and Equity Policy

1. Purpose

This policy describes how Whitecliffe 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.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Whitecliffe students, and academic and general staff.

3. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following institute policies:

- Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy
- Admissions Policies
- Misconduct Policy and Procedure
- Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Procedure
- Monitoring Academic Progression Policy and Procedure
- Complaints & Appeals Policy and Procedure

All documents referenced in this policy can be accessed via the [Forms & Policies](#) section on the college website.

4. Related Legislation

This framework considers the following legislation:

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Multicultural NSW Act 2000
- Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1979
- Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTIQA+) Act 2024 NSW
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984

5. Definitions

In the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Item	Definition
Disability	Means*: a) total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions or of a part of a person's body, or b) the presence in a person's body of organisms causing or capable of causing disease or illness, or

Item	Definition
	c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body, or d) a disorder or malfunction that results in a person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction, or e) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions, or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour. *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
Discrimination	Means** unfair treatment of an individual because of: a) disability (includes diseases and illnesses) b) sex (includes pregnancy and breastfeeding) c) race d) age e) marital or domestic status f) homosexuality g) transgender status h) carer's responsibilities. **Anti-Discrimination NSW
Disadvantaged	Refers to people who lack basic resources or conditions such as adequate income, education, housing, healthcare, or social opportunities—needed to participate equally in society.
Diversity	Means any characteristics including but not limited to gender, disability, race, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, cultural and socio-economic background, protected under Australian Law.
Equity	Means fairness in the way student and staff are treated, irrespective of their differences based on social, economic, or demographic characteristics

6. Principles

- 6.1. Whitcliffe is committed to the principles of diversity, access, and equity in education and employment.
- 6.2. Whitecliffe ensures all students are treated with equity and are able to participate in tertiary study and engage with the institute's community by:
 - Ensuring the learning, social and cultural environment supports the participation of all staff and students including First Nations, those with a disability, 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 are not tolerated.
 - Protecting the rights of gender equality.
 - Respecting and valuing diversity.
- 6.3. Whitecliffe complies with all relevant laws and regulations related to education, human rights, workplace obligations, student rights, health and safety, and anti-discrimination and harassment.

7. Access and Equity

7.1. Admissions

- 7.1.1. 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. Whitecliffe has equal benefits and opportunities processes.
- 7.1.2. Whitecliffe is committed to student diversity and encourages applications from people:
- from culturally diverse backgrounds
 - from disadvantaged backgrounds
 - First Nations
 - with special needs
 - returning to study after an interruption for family responsibilities
 - considering a career change
- 7.1.3. For more information on admission criteria and the process of admission, please refer to the college *Admission to Coursework for Domestic and International Students Policy and Procedure*, and the course-specific information sets.

7.2. Students with Disabilities

- 7.2.1. Whitecliffe can assist students with a disability to meet a range of individual educational goals both within and outside the criteria and standards, by taking meaningful, transparent, and reasonable steps to consult, consider and implement reasonable adjustments for students with disability.
- 7.2.2. 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 and procedures.
- 7.2.3. 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 Institute's *Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Procedure*.
- 7.2.4. During the process of admission, it is a student's responsibility to declare and communicate their disability, to ensure Whitecliffe can put in place provisions for their support and success. Whitecliffe 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 and Procedure*.

7.3. Safe Environment

- 7.3.1. Every member of the Whitecliffe 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.

7.3.2. Whitecliffe takes all complaints of harassment, bullying or intimidating behaviour seriously and follow a four-stage resolution process as prescribed in the *Complaints & Appeals Policy and Procedure*. All people belonging to the Whitecliffe 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.

7.3.3. Whitecliffe will report all criminal acts committed to the relevant authorities.

8. First Nations Students Framework

8.1. Overview

8.1.1. Whitecliffe Institute acknowledges the need for providing equivalent opportunities for all its students, regardless of their background, to support their academic success. As part of Whitecliffe's commitment to equity and access, this Framework outlines the considerations provided to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of First Nations Students.

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

8.1.2. As an Institute of Higher Education, Whitecliffe 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 First Nations students.
- Standard 6.2.1.g that requires that policies and practises support the participation of First Nations peoples and are sensitive to First Nations culture.

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

8.2. Objective

8.2.1. The Framework ensures that, as part of Whitecliffe's diversity and equity commitment:

- First Nations students and staff are considered in Whitecliffe policies, procedures, practices, and systems; and
- An inclusive and accessible environment is provided that supports academic success of First Nations students.

8.3. Approach

8.3.1. Whitecliffe applies the following principles in its approach towards the inclusion of First Nations students and staff:

8.3.1.1. We commit to foster cultural knowledge and understanding:

2. Provide a culturally safe environment for First Nations peoples including students, staff, and visitors.
 - a. Offer training to staff and students on First Nations culture.
 - b. Commit to the use of diverse imagery representation and the use of an acknowledgement of country in Whitecliffe collateral and materials.

8.3.1.2. Nurture participation and completion:

- a. Encourage the recruitment and admission of First Nations students.

- b. Provide equal opportunities for academic success.
 - c. Identify First Nations 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.
3. Proactively monitor student participation and apply early interventions as necessary.
- e. Whitecliffe 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 Whitecliffe website, in the student handbook and via the staff intranet.

8.4. Monitoring and Reporting

8.4.1. Whitecliffe regularly monitors its approach towards promoting accessibility and inclusion of First Nations students, to evaluate its effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement.

8.4.2. The Whitecliffe Student Management System and Learning Management System are designed to ensure analytics can be conducted based on student cohort demographic attributes, such as First Nations status.

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

8.4.4. Key reports are provided to relevant Whitecliffe staff as well as governance committees, including the Academic Board and Governing Board, with a specific focus on monitoring participation, progress, completion, and outcomes achieved by First Nations students.

8.4.5. The Academic Board and Governing Board are ultimately responsible for the monitoring of participation, progress, completion, and outcomes achieved by First Nations students.

8.4.6. The table below outlines the approach taken towards supporting First Nations students throughout the student lifecycle and the reporting and monitoring in place to evaluate success. Further details on reporting are outlined in the Whitecliffe Reporting Framework.

Stage	Approach	Monitoring/ Reporting	HESF
Recruitment	4. 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 practices. • Training of recruitment staff. • Data reports on enquiries and conversion rates to application by student demographic cohort.	1.1.1 7.2

Stage	Approach	Monitoring/ Reporting	HESF
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 Learning and Teaching 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 Learning and Teaching Committee.	1.3.1 1.3.2c
Progression and Participation	• Provide opportunities to access language and academic skills support. • Ensure fair and reasonable allocation of resources. • Actively monitor student progression and participation. • Identify students likely to be at risk and apply early interventions. • Identify students at risk and apply support strategies.	• Annual review of policies and procedures relating to progression and participation. • The Chief Academic Officer monitors participation regularly and ensures that sufficient resources are allocated. • Monitor student progression and participation by student demographic and report findings to the Learning and Teaching Committee. • Use an evidence-based approach to identify strategies to support	1.3.4 1.3.5 1.3.6

Stage	Approach	Monitoring/ Reporting	HESF
	• Require facilitators to monitor student engagement and participation. • Make available student mentors and buddy systems. • Monitoring Academic Progression policy and procedure.	student progression and participation.	
Wellbeing and Safety	• Provide training to staff relating to student wellbeing and safety. • Embed wellbeing and safety information in student orientation and student handbook. • 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.	• Annual review of Work Health and Safety (WHS), Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) and Critical Incident policies. • Review and analyse incidents reported relating to WHS, bullying and harassment, critical incidents. • Seek feedback from students and staff regarding wellbeing and safety and available support. • Report insights related to incidents and feedback to Academic Board and Governing Board on a regular basis.	2.3
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 5.do not present unexpected barriers, costs, or technology requirements for students, including those with special needs. 6.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. 7.Monitor participation and appropriateness of student services, resources, and infrastructure to ensure they meet student needs. 8.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

Stage	Approach	Monitoring/ Reporting	HESF
Completion	• Ensure completion of studies in accordance with the relevant policies. • et unit and course completion KPIs.	• Track completion via Student Management System. • Data reported by student demographic to the Academic Board and tracked against KPIs	1.3
Feedback and Participation	• 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 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 First Nations students.	5.3.5

9. Change and Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Authored by	Approved by	Description
v1.0 30042023	25 May 2023	QA Manager	Academic Board	Policy updated under new ownership, ATSI Framework incorporated
v1.1. 19092024	23 Sep 2024	Director of Operations and Compliance	Director of Operations and Compliance	Policy vernacular/acronym amended from ATSI to First Nations Students
V1.1 Aug 2026	08.09.2026	Collaborative	CEO	Health check – minor amendments; terminology, branding, and formatting updates.

10. Policy Information

Policy owner:	Director of Operations and Compliance
Approved by:	CEO
Approval date:	08.09.2026
Status:	Approved
Next review due	May 2028