ZENITH INNOVATION INSTITUTE
UNPARALLELED EXCELLENCE

Student Equity and Diversity Policy and Procedure

Approving body	Governing Board (GB)
Date approved	27 Feb 2025
Date of effect	Commencement of operation
Next scheduled review	Two years from policy commencement
Policy owner	Chief Executive Officer
Policy contact	Chief Executive Officer
Related Documents	Admissions Policy and Procedure Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure Quality Assurance Framework Risk Management Framework Staff Code of Conduct Student Code of Conduct Student Support Framework
Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) 2021 (Cth)	Standard 1.1.1 Standard 1.3 Standard 2.2.1-3 Standard 2.3.3 Standard 3.3.3-4 Standard 7.2.2

Purpose

1.	This Policy outlines **Zenith Innovation Institute's** (**Zenith / the Institute**) approach for student equity and diversity, including the development, implementation, and regular review of strategies for creating equivalent opportunities for academic success and access to learning resources regardless of students' backgrounds.

Scope

2.	This Policy applies to:

	(a)	all students;

	(b)	all staff of the Institute including members of the Institute's governing bodies; and

(c)   any external party engaged to provide education and/or student support services to the Institute.

Policy

Statement

3.   The Institute aims to develop and maintain a culture of respect for diversity and put in place processes that ensure equivalent opportunities for all Zenith students, with a particular focus on historically disadvantaged or underrepresented student populations, other groups protected in equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4.   The Institute adopts a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination in line with anti-discrimination legislation. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the *Student Support Framework, Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure, he Staff Code of Conduct*, and the *Student Code of Conduct*.

Principles

5.   This Policy is based on the following principles:

(a)   Zenith aims to prevent discrimination across all areas of the Institute's operations, including disseminating information to stakeholders that Zenith does not tolerate any form of discrimination;

(b)   management is made aware of its responsibilities with regard to the implementation of processes for creating and maintaining equal opportunities for all students;

(c)   all governing body members, staff, students, and external parties engaged by the Institute are made aware of and must comply with legislative provisions relating to discrimination, harassment or victimisation;

(d)   all members of the Institute's community including students and staff are to report instances of discrimination, harassment or victimisation to the Institute;

(e)   the Institute is committed to enabling all students, regardless of their background or identity, to successfully participate, progress, and complete their studies; and

(f)   students and staff are encouraged to disclose to the Institute if they identify as a member of groups protected in equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation.

Procedure

Strategies

6.   The Institute endeavours to provide a discrimination-free environment for all students throughout their experience with the Institute. Key strategies for the creation and maintenance of equal opportunities are outlined below.

(a)   **Culture:** The Institute is committed to a culture of respect, equity and diversity through awareness, training, benchmarking, and monitoring.

(b) **Governance and Leadership:** Governance bodies and senior staff will demonstrate through adoption of specific strategies commitment to equity and diversity in the Institute.

(c) **Understanding of diversity:** The Institute takes active steps to understand the characteristics and mix of both prospective and enrolled students.

(d) **Understanding of barriers:** The Institute maintains an understanding of barriers to access and participation in education to inform strategies for inclusion and participation

(e) **Staff awareness:** All staff of the Institute are to be made aware of the obligations of the Institute with regard to anti-discrimination laws. Staff induction includes a component on equity and diversity and the Institute's relevant reporting and complaints mechanisms. Staff members will be made aware of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultures.

(f) **Student awareness:** Students will receive information, including an awareness session at orientation, on equity and diversity and their rights and responsibilities in maintaining an environment free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation e.g. posters around the campus.

(g) **Third-party compliance:** Where services are provided on behalf of the Institute by third parties, the Institute will assure that all services are delivered in compliance with the Institute's policies.

Admission

7. Specific strategies to promote equity and diversity in admissions include:

(a) **Information:** Information on admission processes and entry requirements are easily accessible and available in a range of formats and supports informed decision-making about studying at the Institute. All policies and procedures are easily accessible prior to applying for admission;

(b) **Proficiency assessment:** For each prospective student, academic preparation, proficiency in English, and any impediment to participation and progress are assessed during the admission process. Adjustment to admission criteria will be considered for applicants identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and

(c) **Needs assessment:** The particular needs and preparedness of commencing students are individually assessed during the admission process. Specific strategies as per the below will be implemented to support all students.

Participation

8. Specific strategies during the course of study include:

(a) **Transition:** Commencing students receive transition support, including education sessions on expectations with regard to academic integrity and progress. Students with particular needs are encouraged to seek additional assistance from Student Support;

(b) **Facilities and resources:** Facilities and resources are easily accessible and available, in particular, access to learning resources will not present unexpected barriers, costs or technology requirements;

(c) **Special consideration:** Special consideration will be given and reasonable adjustments made if fair and practicable to remove any impediments to participation while ensuring the likelihood of progression; and

(d) **Learning support:** Learning support is tailored to student subgroups and are consistent with the requirements of the course. Any students who require additional support are encouraged to seek additional personalised support from Student Support.

Course design

9. Specific considerations during course design with regard to equity and diversity include:

(a) **Curriculum:** The curriculum, teaching and study materials, and equipment requirements for the course are selected and reviewed to confirm that they do not present unnecessary barriers to any students including for those with diverse backgrounds;

(b) **Delivery modes and activities:** The delivery modes and learning activities of the course take account of intended learning outcomes and the learning capacities and needs of all students. In addition, the Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure seeks to assist students with special needs; and

(c) **Assessment:** Assessment procedures and methodologies for the course are designed to enable students from all backgrounds to demonstrate the knowledge, skills or competencies being assessed. The Student Support Framework encourages students to seek personalised academic and non-academic assistance for academic success.

Support services

10. A range of services are provided by the Institute to promote equity and diversity and include:

(a) **Training:** Staff members are made aware of the services available and are trained to assist students from a variety of backgrounds to access the services as and when needed; and

(b) **Service provision:** Support services, including health and wellbeing services, are adequate considering the students subgroup and relevant needs.

Process

11. The Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**) is the designated contact for the Institute and has ultimate responsibility for the management of complaints made under this policy.

12. Student Services staff will provide support for any student who has faced any discrimination or lack of access to learning resources. Where necessary, students will be referred to specialist support or advocacy services.

13. Any student who feels they have suffered as a consequence of a breach of this Policy may also choose to lodge a formal complaint at any time following the steps outlined in the *Student Grievance Policy and Procedure*.

14. Confirmed breaches of this Policy will be addressed under the provisions of the *Student Misconduct Policy and* Procedure or the *Staff Code of Conduct* depending on whether the alleged perpetrator is a student or staff member respectively.

15. Where a staff member witnesses alleged discrimination or victimisation of a student, they should first encourage the student to seek support and report the incident as outlined above. Where appropriate the staff member may make a report to the CEO who may take action under the *Student Misconduct Policy and Procedure* or the *Staff Code of Conduct*.

Monitoring and improvement

16.   The Institute collects data on the participation, progress, and completion of identified student groups. Student feedback is sought on their experience of diversity and equity at the Institute, including access to support services.

17.   The Institute uses the collected data to monitor trends in admission, participation, retention, and completion rates by student cohorts.

18.   The Institute will improve its anti-discrimination and equal opportunity strategies based on the collected data, in particular in relation to the access and effectiveness of support services.

19.   The Institute will benchmark its performance against relevant sector data and will establish targets as appropriate.

20.   The Governing Board (GB) receives an annual report on the adequacy and effectiveness of its strategies considering the student cohort or subgroup and will make adjustments to its strategies as required including resourcing continuous improvement.

Complaints and appeals

21.   The Institute is committed to ensuring that persons who feel they have been discriminated against and/or report an instance of discrimination are not victimised.

22.   Students should refer to the *Student Grievance Policy and Procedure* for further advice regarding complaints and associated processes.

23.   A student may appeal against a decision made resulting from the *Student Grievance Policy and Procedure,* according to the provisions in the *Student Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

Responsibilities

24.   All students are responsible for:

   (a)   ensuring that their behaviour and conduct reflects the standards of the Institute's *Student Code of Conduct;*

   (b)   not taking unfavourable or retaliatory action against a person that has reported alleged discrimination; and

   (c)   reporting instances of discrimination or victimisation promptly to the relevant authorities at Zenith.

25.   All staff are responsible for:

   (a)   complying with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws at all times in the course of their duties, including the obligation not to discriminate, harass or victimise any person;

   (b)   ensuring that their behaviour and conduct always reflect the standards of the Institute's *Staff Code of Conduct;*

   (c)   not taking unfavourable action or retaliatory against a person that has reported alleged discrimination; and

   (d)   reporting instances of discrimination or victimisation to the CEO promptly or supporting students who wish to make a complaint.

26.   The CEO is responsible for:

   (a)   managing complaints under this Policy that are reported directly to them;

(b)   implementing the strategies outlined in this Procedure; and

(c)   reporting on the implementation of all strategies for equity and diversity to the Governing Board (GB) on a yearly basis.

27.   The Academic Dean is responsible for:

(a)   collecting and reporting student profile data of prospective and current students;

(b)   implementing the strategies for admission to enable participation in line with this Policy; and

(c)   reporting to the CEO on the implementation of strategies at the end of each teaching session.

28.   Course Coordinators are responsible for:

(a)   implementing the strategies relating to participation and course design (as outlined above); and

(b)   reporting to the CEO on the implementation of strategies, and any observable trends, at the end of each teaching session.

29.   Student Administration Officer are responsible for:

(a)   implementing the strategies for Support Services; and

(b)   reporting to the CEO on the implementation of strategies, and any observable trends, at the end of each teaching session.

Definitions

30.   The following definitions are intended to be easily read and understood. The definitions are not legal definitions. Where in doubt the relevant legislation and legislative definition will prevail.

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.
Discrimination	Treating or proposing to treat a person less favourably than, in circumstances that are the same or are not materially different, the discriminator treats or would treat another person because of a personal characteristic protected by the law, such as sex, age, race or disability.
Diversity	The presence of a variety of backgrounds, cultures, ages, abilities, religions, or characteristics within a group.
Equity	The provision of similar opportunities to participate in education.
Victimisation	Subjecting or threatening to subject someone to a detriment because they have asserted their rights under equal opportunity law, made a complaint, helped someone else make a complaint, or refused to do something because it would be discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Version History

Version	Changes	Approval Body	Approval Date
1.0	New Policy	Governing Board (GB)	
1.1	Point 11 updated from "management of complaints made under" to "management of complaints made under this policy".	Governing Board (GB)	22 Aug 2024
1.2	Under Related Documents added "Student Support Framework" Point 1 added "and access to learning resources" Point 2 c) added "education" Point 6 f) replaced "regular communication" with "information" Point 8 a) added "Students with particular needs are encouraged to seek additional assistance from Student Support" Point 8 d) added "Any students who require additional support are encouraged to seek additional personalised support from Student Support." Point 9 b) added "In addition, the Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure seeks to assist students with special needs" Point 9 c) added "The Student Support Framework encourages students to seek personalised academic and non-academic assistance for academic success" Point 11 replaced "Equity Contact Officer" with "contact" Point 17 added "by student cohorts" Point 20 added "cohort or" and also added "including resourcing continuous improvement" Point 24 c) added "to the relevant authorities at Zenith"	Governing Board (GB)	27 Feb 2025