

ACCESS AND EQUITY

1.0 Purpose

The principal role of the Access and Equity Policy is to promote full and equal participation of all external and internal individuals at Step 123. Step 123 will endeavour to promote and foster an environment free of discrimination and harassment to all its stakeholders.

Step 123 will comply with its legal and moral duty to respect the rights and beliefs of course participants and staff through avoidance of discrimination, recognition of the special needs of clients and course participants, physical access to courses, mentoring, culturally appropriate behaviour, and equal opportunity.

In line with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 – Standard 4 & 5, Step 123 ensures that potential learners are aware of the programs and support services provided, the responsibilities and obligations of the RTO, and the delivery and assessment structures to enable an informed decision to enrol and commence training.

2.0 Responsibility

2.1 The CEO and Managing Director are responsible for implementation of this procedure and ensuring that all staff members are aware of the procedure.

3.0 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all employees, partners/brokers, and learners of Step 123 (45007) in relation to learner recruitment and access to its courses and other services. This policy relates to the following legislation: Australian Consumer Law, Anti-Discrimination Act, Equal Opportunity Act, and Disability Act in each State and Territory, Working with Children Act, and Privacy Laws. This policy includes all regulatory requirements that fall under the RTO's obligations as a registered training organisation.

4.0 Definitions

Access - In an educational environment, access relates to entry into a course. This includes ensuring a learner is not discriminated against through the selection and enrolment process, including working within State and Federal government eligibility criteria. The RTO must make its training and assessment services available to everyone, free from any form of discrimination and irrespective of a person's age, gender, disability, country of birth, language, race, religion, culture, or other background.

AQF Level – Stands for Australian Qualifications Framework. The AQF is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework which has identified qualifications as meeting academic levels (Level 1 – 10).

Discrimination - Occurs when a person or group of people is treated less favourably than others due to the person or group's circumstances, characteristics, or beliefs.

- Direct discrimination takes place when a person or group is treated less fairly than others because of their background or personal characteristics.

- Indirect discrimination includes rules, practices, or policies that appear to be non-discriminatory and equally applicable but operate in such a way that certain groups of people are excluded without just cause.

Equity – In an educational environment, equity means that training and assessment products and services will be delivered on the basis of fair treatment for all learners. Equity is not about treating everyone equally but about ensuring that all learners have an opportunity to reach their potential and gain their qualification, no matter which pathway they take or the assistance they require.

Harassment - Includes the following behaviours: i. Verbal, written, and physical harassment
ii. Unwanted sexual advances
iii. Bullying
iv. Violence
v. Vilification
vi. Victimisation and/or ostracisation
vii. Inappropriate comments in the classroom and/or on social media
viii. Hazing

- **RTO** – Means Step 123 (45007)
- **Students/Learners** - Refers to students who are currently enrolled in a Step 123 course.

5.0 Policy

5.1 The RTO makes available to potential learners accurate and factual information regarding its courses and services.

- The RTO offers training and assessment to all potential learners regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or intellectual impairment, and treats all learners and potential learners fairly and without discrimination.
- All persons have the opportunity to access the RTO's training and assessment services on a fair and equitable basis.
- Each potential learner receives a copy of the Participant Information Handbook electronically prior to enrolment, which contains information on the RTO's role and responsibilities, course information, fees and charges, relevant policies and procedures, and learner support services available.
- Step 123 conducts a thorough pre-training review and selection process to assist the potential learner in ensuring the course they are applying for is most suitable for them. The pre-training review includes a Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (LLN), information on previous employment, checking educational history, and Federal and State funding eligibility.
- Step 123 provides a learning environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

5.2 Bullying and Harassment Step 123 has zero tolerance for any type of bullying and harassment. If bullying and harassment occur, the person responsible will be subject to disciplinary action. This may include termination of employment and removal of the learner from the training course. Step 123 will not tolerate behaviour that is considered sexual harassment and expects all staff, contractors, and learners to treat each other with dignity and respect. Serious cases of harassment may constitute a criminal offence.

5.3 Victorian Skills First Program Step 123 (21254) is an approved provider to offer funding via the Victorian Skills First Program to eligible learners for select courses on their scope of registration and on the Skills First Funded Courses Report. For information about the Skills First Eligibility Criteria, please refer to the Victorian Skills Gateway website. Each learner must complete a Pre-Training Review to be assessed for their suitability for a particular course. The Pre-Training Review is a vital part of the application process and contributes to the business process of establishing evidence of suitability and entry into a course.

5.4 Procedure Step 123 is committed to effecting change that promotes equality of opportunity for all. The Access and Equity Policy is guided by the following principles:

- I. That all staff and participants have a right to equality of opportunity.
- II. That there is recognition of, respect for, and promotion of diversity within our community.
- III. That there is encouragement of initiatives to effect change.
- IV. That while some people clearly need our advocacy, we support and encourage people on the journey of self-determination and self-advocacy (empowerment).
- V. That everybody has a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Step 123 upholds the principle that all applicants enrolling are treated fairly and equitably. Step 123 has open, fair, clear, and transparent policies and procedures to ensure that all participants are treated in a courteous, professional, and impartial manner.

As part of the induction process, all participants are provided with information relating to the following services:

- I. Disability Services
- II. Harassment and Discrimination Complaints
- III. Equal Opportunity for Women
- IV. Equal Employment Opportunities
- V. Racial Discrimination
- VI. Working Rights

The CEO ensures that the structures and practices of Step 123 align with state and national legislation regarding all areas of equal opportunity, including sex discrimination, racial discrimination, and disability discrimination for all within the workforce. This is achieved by supervising the incorporation of the main principles of the state and national legislation listed below into all Step 123 policies and operating procedures.

Revision history

Revision	Date	Description of modifications
1	21st February 2025	First Version