

# STEP123

RTO 45007 / TRADE SKILLING CENTRE

# Student Handbook

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RTO 45007



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**Website:** [www.step123.edu.au](http://www.step123.edu.au)

**Email:** [info@step123.edu.au](mailto:info@step123.edu.au)

**Phone:** 03 8528 2682

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## Welcome to Step123!

This Student Handbook provides an overview to Step123 policies and procedures.

### VET Quality Framework

Step123 is involved in the process of delivering nationally recognized training courses. Step123 is registered as an RTO, under the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* to undertake these services, having met and maintained compliance with the *VET Quality Framework* standards and requirements.

Step123 is audited by ASQA to these requirements on an ongoing basis. As the Commonwealth Government established regulator, ASQA has the authority to manage, audit and deregister RTOs.

### Australian Qualifications Framework

The *Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)* is the national policy for qualifications in the Australian education and training system. Step123 complies with the AQF as a condition of its RTO registration.

The AQF recognizes Step123 as an 'authorized issuing organization', able to issue AQF qualifications and statements of attainment to students that have satisfied the relevant competency requirements.

### AQF Recognition

One of the most important features of the *VET Quality Framework* is the recognition of training organizations and AQF qualifications, including Statements of Attainment.

Step123 accepts testamurs issued by another registered training organization and ensures that all Certificates and Statements of Attainment issued by any other registered training organization are accepted as valid.

A testamur may be a Statement of Attainment for specific topics or units of competency, or it may be a complete Qualification such as certificate or diploma.

### Unique Student Identifier

Step123 ensures that it handles individual's personal information in accordance with the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*. Please refer to the *Privacy* section of this manual for further information.

Step123 has published on its website information for clients on how to obtain a Unique Student Identifier.

Where Step123 applies for a USI on behalf of an individual it ensures it has the authorization of that individual. Step123 provides the required *USI Privacy Notice* to all individuals, on whose behalf it is applying for a USI.

Step123 ensures the security of USIs and all related documentation under its control, including information stored in Step123s student management systems. Where Step123 has contracts with third parties under which it discloses information collected for the purposes of the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*, Step123 ensures that any personal information is treated in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*.

Step123 securely destroys personal information which it collects from individuals solely for the purpose of applying for a USI on their behalf as soon as practicable after Step123 has made the application or the information is no longer needed for that purpose, except in cases where Step123 is required by or under any law to retain it.

Step123 applies for or verifies students' USI's at the time of enrolment.

Step123 only issues a qualification or statement of attainment to a student after the student has provided their verified USI or Step123 has applied for a USI on their behalf.

## **Legislative Compliance**

Step123 ensures it complies with Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation and regulatory requirements relevant to its operations. Step123 is subject to a variety of legislation related to training and assessment, as well as general business practice.

This includes, but is not limited to, compliance with:

- The *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011*, and the legislative instruments it enables;
- Workplace health and safety legislation and regulations;
- Anti-discrimination legislation and regulations; and
- Consumer protection requirements.

Step123 ensures its personnel and clients are informed of any changes to legislative and regulatory requirements that affect the services delivered, through internal communication activities.

All Step123 personnel hold an awareness and understanding of the legislation relevant to their position. If uncertain as to the application of any piece of legislation to a specific action or transaction, relevant personnel must seek clarification from their relevant Step123 manager.

A list of relevant industry legislation involved in each service delivered by Step123 is maintained in the individual Training and Assessment Strategy for each training product. Legislative needs noted in strategies are then implemented throughout all resource materials used in services provision.

All Australian legislation is accessible through the following website.

[www.step123.edu.au](http://www.step123.edu.au)

## **Work Health & Safety**

Step123 places a high priority on the health and safety of its personnel and clients. The well-being of individuals can directly affect their job satisfaction, motivation and overall morale in the work environment.

All personnel of Step123 have specific responsibilities for ensuring the health and safety of personnel and students within the workplace at all times. These responsibilities are based on relevant state jurisdiction legislation and reinforced in this document. The specific implementation of health and safety responsibilities of personnel is dependent on their role within Step123 and is included in their *Position Descriptions* accordingly.

Step123 is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all individuals. Step123 makes every reasonable effort to prevent accidents, protect individuals from injury and promote the health, safety and welfare of all individuals.

## **Legislation**

Current work health and safety legislation that effects Step123 operations as an RTO includes, but is not limited to:

- *VIC Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*;

## **Responsibilities**

All individuals:

- Have a responsibility to comply with all occupational health and safety procedures;
- Must take reasonable care of themselves and others on the premises;
- Must not interfere with or misuse items or facilities provided in the interest of health and safety; and
- Must report any incidents, actual or potential hazards and "near misses" to their relevant

Step123 contact. All personnel have the responsibility to:

- Adhere to safe work practices, instructions and rules;

- Immediately report any unsafe work condition or equipment to management;
- Not misuse, damage, refuse to use, or interfere with anything provided in the interest of health and safety;
- Perform all work duties in a manner which ensures individual health and safety and that of all other employees;
- Encourage fellow personnel to create and maintain a safe and healthy work environment;
- Co-operate with all other personnel to enable the health and safety responsibilities of all individuals be achieved. All personnel employed by Step123 have a primary responsibility to ensure that the work they undertake or supervise is carried out in a safe manner. Step123 personnel are required to:
- Take reasonable care of themselves and others that may be affected by their acts or omissions;
- Contribute to and be involved in the Step123's ongoing management of health and safety;
- Comply with all workplace policies and procedures implemented in relation to health and safety; and
- Report all situations that may adversely impact on health and safety.

## **Premises**

All permanent delivery sites used by Step123 comply with the *Building Code of Australia (BCA)* and local legislative requirements related to health and safety.

It is the responsibility of the Step123 Chief Executive Officer to ensure that all permanent delivery sites comply with the building, health and safety approval requirements of each site used for training delivery (i.e., educational premises) in line with local requirements.

Where appropriate, the Chief Executive Officer will arrange for relevant approvals (i.e., occupancy certificate, 9B classification Certificate etc.). There are some differences of approach between the jurisdictions in whether or not they issue approvals for the use of buildings as educational premises on the basis that premises meet BCA requirements. Where such approval is not required the Chief Executive Officer shall ensure appropriate evidence that each delivery site meets the BCA requirements.

On an ongoing basis, Step123 personnel undertaking service provision ensure training premises are of adequate size and have adequate heating, ventilation, cooling and lighting.

## **External Premises**

A health and safety assessment will be made of each external training room and environment to enable risk management strategies to be implemented using the *External WHS Site Checklist*. Any identified risks must be raised with the relevant Training Manager for immediate attention and actions taken as required.

## **General Health & Safety Matters**

Step123 operates and provides a workplace that is compliant with health and safety laws, codes of practice, and standards which impact upon its operations.

Step123 makes every effort to identify, assess, and control hazards within all areas that are accessed by personnel or students. These objectives are achieved through the:

- Provision of a safe and healthy work environment and systems of work;
- Maintenance of facilities and equipment under the control of the Step123. All equipment must be checked prior to usage to ensure safe usage;
- Provision of training for personnel to enable them to perform their tasks safely;
- Ongoing inspection and review of the work place, work practices, and procedures; and
- Appropriate response in the event of an incident to ensure an investigation is conducted to prevent a recurrence.

## **Information & Awareness**

All personnel are made aware of health and safety responsibilities at induction, through the Policy and Procedures Manual and on an ongoing basis through relevant communication methods.

All Step123 students are made aware of health and safety responsibilities prior to enrolment, through the



student Handbook and on an ongoing basis through relevant communication methods.

Step123 personnel and students are:

- Trained where required in the safe use, handling and storage of equipment and materials;
- Made aware of safe travel and parking arrangements for all operational locations; and
- Provided with adequate information regarding hazards and risks within each operational premises.

### **Consultation**

Step123 consults regularly with personnel regarding the development, implementation and review of health and safety issues.

## **Child Safety**

### **1.1. Our Commitment to Child Safety**

STEP123 is committed to child safety.

All students under eighteen (18) years of age who are supported by STEP123 have a right to feel and be safe. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We promote diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

STEP123 is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all personnel and committed to regularly training and education our personnel on child abuse risks.

### **1.2. Legislative Framework**

Providing services nationally, STEP123 has implemented a Child Safe framework aligned to national legislative requirements including, but is not limited to:

- *Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)*;
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*;
- *Care and Protection of Children Act 2014 (NT)*;
- *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 (QLD)*;
- *Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA)*;
- *Working with Children Act 2005 (VIC)*;
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (VIC)*;
- *Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (TAS)*; and
- *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 (WA)*.

STEP123 is committed to establishing and maintaining child safe environments and has designed services with a particular focus on:

- The *Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing* framework (NSW); and

- *Child Safe Standards (VIC).*

As a child safe organization, STEP123:

- Has a visible culture of child safety that is part of everyday practice;
- Has strong leadership driving a culture of child safety;
- Has the safety of children as its prime consideration;
- Has well-articulated policies and procedures to implement its child safe approach;
- Actively encourages participation, empowerment and serves to protect children;
- Has actively considered risks of abuse within the organization;
- Engages with children to create a child safe environment and empowers children to speak up if something is wrong; and
- Has inclusive approaches for children with a disability, Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

### **1.3. Child Abuse**

Reporting child abuse is a community-wide responsibility. Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- Physical violence;
- Sexual offences;
- Serious emotional or psychological abuse; and
- Serious neglect.

**Call the police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety.**

All STEP123 personnel are required to report to police if they know or reasonably believe that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. *It is a criminal offence (failure to disclose) to fail to comply with this obligation across jurisdictions.*

#### **What is a 'reasonable belief'?**

A 'reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- A child states that they have been sexually abused;
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused;
- Observations of the child's behavior or development leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused; or
- Signs of sexual abuse led to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

If a person 16 years or older provided you with the information and they do not have an intellectual disability and they do not want the information reported to the police, an individual is then not required to report to police.

STEP123 will not tolerate incidents of child abuse. All personnel understand their obligation to notify relevant authorities as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a minor has been, or is being, abused or neglected by a member of their family or any other individual:

- Australian Capital Territory Child Protection Line – 1300 556 728
- New South Wales Child Protection Line - 13 21 11

- Northern Territory Child Protection Line – 1800 700 250
- Queensland Child Safety Line - 1800 177 135
- South Australia Child Abuse Report Line - 13 14 78
- Tasmania Child Protection Line – 1300 737 639
- Victoria Child Protection Crisis Line – 13 12 78
- Western Australia Child Protection Line – 13 14 44

#### **1.4. Child Safety Officer**

STEP123 has appointed a child safety officer for its TRAINING operations, being the designated person to hear or be informed about all allegations or concerns, and providing support to other personnel.

Child Safety Officer - Nasir Naqvi

3 Lucknow Cres

Thomastown VIC 3074

03 8528 2682

info@step123.edu.au

Our designated child safety officer provides a single contact for children, parents and personnel to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children.

#### **1.5. Code of Conduct**

All STEP123 personnel are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behavior towards and in the company of children and are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- Adhering to STEP123's child safe policy at all times / upholding STEP123's statement of commitment to child safety at all times.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability.
- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child.
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Child Safety Officer & STEP123 management, and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection.
- Reporting any child safety concerns to the Child Safety Officer & STEP123 management.
- If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.
- Encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organizational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Personnel must not:

- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favoritism.
- Exhibit behaviors with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical.
- Put children at risk of abuse.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves.
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children.
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children.
- Discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- Have organized contact with a child or their family outside of our organization without our child safety

- officer's knowledge and/or consent.
- Have any inappropriate online contact with a child or their family.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards all personnel acknowledge individual responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Child Safety Officer & STEP123 management.

## **1.6. Risk management**

STEP123 ensures the protection of children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimize child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

### **1.6.1. Training and supervision**

STEP123 culture aims for all individuals to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

STEP123 has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team and personnel to achieve these commitments. We support personnel through ongoing supervision to ensure they understand our organization's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behavior towards children is safe and appropriate.

### **1.6.2. Regular review**

STEP123 reviews this policy regularly and following any significant incidents should it occur. Where possible we do our best to work with families, children, local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

## **1.7. Procedures - Allegations, concerns and complaints**

STEP123 takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Personnel are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families and personnel know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behavior. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

### **1.7.1. Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions made by STEP123 when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organization take.

### **1.7.2. Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be personnel, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. STEP123 has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

### **1.7.3. If a child discloses an incident of abuse**

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organization, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Child Safety Officer and STEP123 management as well as police or child protection as relevant.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

### **1.7.4. If a parent/carer says their child has been abused or raises a concern**

- Explain that STEP123 has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the STEP123 management or Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
- Be aware that:
  - Individuals from Aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse.
  - Individuals with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet individuals' needs where possible.

Personnel must follow the Critical Actions below every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

If personnel believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing they must still act.

#### **YOU MUST TAKE ACTION**

Personnel play a critical role in protecting children in our care.

You must act, by following the Four Critical Actions below, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.

You must act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g., if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).

You must use an incident reporting form to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

## **ACTION 1: Responding to an emergency**

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:

- Separating alleged victims and others involved.
- Administering first aid.
- Calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Identifying a contact person in your organization for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

## **Action 2: Reporting to authorities**

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse or suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Police.

You must also report internally to the Child Safety Officer and STEP123 management.

If the source of suspected abuse is from within the family or community, you must report the suspected abuse to the relevant Child Protection Authority in the State or Territory jurisdiction.

This includes if a child is considered to be:

- In need of protection from child abuse
- At risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

## **Action 3: Contacting parents / carers**

The Child Safety Officer and STEP123 management must consult with Child Protection and / or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- Not to contact the parents/carers (e.g., in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted); or
- To contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

## **Action 4: Providing ongoing support**

STEP123 must provide support for children impacted by abuse. This includes the development of a Student Support Plan developed in consultation with wellbeing professional and/or counselling staff.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

### **1.7.5. Additional support – mandatory reporting**

STEP123 management uses appropriate tools to inform decision making, such as the online *Mandatory Reporter Guide*, professional judgment or specialist advice, where there are concerns about risk of harm.

The mandatory reporter guide is available at: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>



## 1.8. Working with Children Checks

All STEP123 personnel are required to undertake, as a component of the recruitment process, a National Criminal Check to ensure suitability in meeting STEP123's legislative and contractual obligations. National criminal checks are valid for, and must be renewed every three years.

<https://www.nationalcrimecheck.com.au/>

### 1.8.1. State and Territory Requirements

In addition to the above national check, the following state jurisdictional checks also apply to STEP123 personnel provided services in these jurisdictions. Personnel must have completed and provided an appropriate check prior to commencing employment or engagement:

Jurisdiction	Requirements
Australian Capital Territory	All personnel providing services in the Australian Capital Territory must undertake registration with the Statutory Screening Unit in line with the Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT). Checks are valid for three years. <a href="https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1804/kw/working%20with%20children%20check&amp;#!tabs-1">https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1804/kw/working%20with%20children%20check&amp;#!tabs-1</a>
New South Wales	All personnel providing services in New South Wales must undertake screening in accordance with the requirements of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW). Checks are valid for five years. <a href="http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check">http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check</a>
Northern Territory	All personnel providing services in Northern Territory must undertake a Working with Children Check known as a 'Clearance Notice' as per the Care and Protection of Children Act 2014 (NT). Checks are valid for two years. <a href="https://nt.gov.au/emergency/community-safety/apply-for-a-working-with-children-clearance">https://nt.gov.au/emergency/community-safety/apply-for-a-working-with-children-clearance</a>
Queensland	All personnel providing services in Queensland must obtain a Suitability Card or blue card in accordance with the requirements of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 (QLD). Checks are valid for two years. <a href="http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/">http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/</a>
South Australia	All personnel providing services in South Australia must undertake screening in accordance with the requirements of the Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA). Checks are valid for three years. <a href="http://screening.dcsi.sa.gov.au/">http://screening.dcsi.sa.gov.au/</a>
Tasmania	All personnel providing services in Tasmania must undertake screening in accordance with the requirements of the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (TAS). Checks are valid for three years. <a href="http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/working_with_children">http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/working_with_children</a>

Jurisdiction Requirements	
Victoria	All personnel providing services in Victoria must undertake a Victorian "Working with Children" check as a component of the recruitment process, in line with the Working with Children Act 2005 (VIC). Checks are valid for five years. <a href="http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/">http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/</a>
Western Australia	All personnel providing services in Western Australia must undertake a Working with Children Check by the Working with Children Screening Unit of the Western Australian Department of Community Development in accordance with the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 (WA). Checks are valid for three years. <a href="https://workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au/">https://workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au/</a>

It is the responsibility of each individual to register for and obtain the required check(s). Potential personnel with adverse findings in these checks undertaken at the time of recruitment will not be employed by within a student service role.

## **Step123 Management Responsibilities**

Step123 management must:

- Determine whether concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children or young Individuals constitute risk of significant harm and, if they do, report these to the relevant government departments in their jurisdiction;
- Seek advice from the relevant government departments where there is uncertainty about whether concerns amount to risk of significant harm; and
- Contact the relevant government departments about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young Individuals where:
  - There are concerns about risk of harm, that do not meet the threshold of significant harm but are not trivial;
  - The Mandatory Reporter Guide indicates this should be done;
  - A case has been reported to the relevant government departments and did not meet the risk of significant harm threshold; or
  - There is an observable pattern of cumulative harm that does not meet the threshold of significant harm.

## **Step123 Personnel Responsibilities**

Step123 representatives must:

- Participate in a child safety induction and in annual updates. This includes all personnel;
- Adhere to mandatory procedures for conveying risk of harm concerns to the Step123 Chief Executive Officer;
- Adhere to mandatory procedures for reporting risk of significant harm to relevant government departments in their jurisdiction;
- Ensure, where they have reported any risk of significant harm concerns to the Step123 Chief Executive Officer, that the Chief Executive Officer has reported those concerns to Community Services;
- Report directly to the relevant government department if they believe the Chief Executive Officer has not reported risk of significant harm concerns, and they still have concerns about risk of significant harm;
- Ensure that any relevant information that they become aware of, subsequent to a report being made to the relevant government department, is provided to the relevant government department. If the additional information forms a concern about risk of significant harm a report must be made to the relevant government department;
- Cooperate with reasonable steps to coordinate service delivery and decision-making with other relevant RTOs;
- Avoid undertaking any investigation of the circumstances giving rise to a report where risk of significant harm has been reported, without the express prior approval of the relevant government department; and



- Inform students, including apprentices or trainees, of their right to be protected from abuse and of avenues of support if they have concerns about abuse.
- <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

## **Server/Management Human resources practices for child safe organization**

### **National Crime Checks**

All Step123 personnel are required to undertake, as a component of the recruitment process, a *National Criminal Check* to ensure suitability in meeting Step123's legislative and contractual obligations.

### **Privacy**

Step123 is committed to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of its personnel and student records. Step123 complies with the *Privacy Act 1988 including the 13 Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)* as outlined in the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012*. Providing an overall framework for our privacy practices, Step123 has developed and implemented this APP Privacy Policy.

This policy is designed to maintain requirements with additional state jurisdictional requirements including:

- Information Privacy Act 2000 (VIC); and
- Step123 manages personal information in an open and transparent way. This is evident in the implementation of practices, procedures and systems we outline in this policy, that ensure our compliance with the APPs and any binding registered APP code, and provide suitable procedures for Step123 personnel to be able to deal with related inquiries and complaints that may be received from time to time.

### **Australian Privacy Principles**

The following sections of this policy outline how we manage personal information.

#### **1.8.2. Australian Privacy Principle 1 – Open and transparent management of personal information**

*Purposes for information collection, retention, use and disclosure*

Step123 retains a record of personal information about all individuals with whom we undertake any form of business activity. Step123 must collect, hold, use and disclose information from our clients and stakeholders for a range of purposes, including but not limited to:

- Providing services to clients;
- Managing employee and contractor teams;
- Promoting products and services;
- Conducting internal business functions and activities; and
- Requirements of stakeholders.

As a government registered training organization, regulated by the Australian Skills Quality Authority, Step123 is required to collect, hold, use and disclose a wide range of personal and sensitive information on students in nationally recognized training programs. This information requirement is outlined in the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* and associated legislative instruments. In particular, the legislative instruments:

- *Student Identifiers Act 2014*;
- *Standards for Registered Training Organizations 2015*; and
- *Data Provision Requirements 2012*.

It is noted that Step123 is also bound by various State Government Acts requiring similar information collection, use and disclosure (particularly *Education Act(s)* and *Vocational Education & Training Act(s)*)

relevant to state jurisdictions of Step123 operations.

It is further noted that, aligned with these legislative requirements, Step123 delivers services through a range of Commonwealth and State Government funding contract agreement arrangements, which also include various information collection and disclosure requirements.

Individuals are advised that due to these legal requirements, Step123 discloses information held on individuals for valid purposes to a range of entities including:

- Governments (Commonwealth, State or Local);
- Employers (and their representatives), Job Network Providers, Schools, Guardians; and
- RTOs such as RTO Management Services for data management, credit agencies and background check providers.

#### *Kinds of personal information collected and held*

The following types of personal information are generally collected, depending on the need for services delivery:

- Contact details;
- Employment details;
- Educational background;
- Demographic Information;
- Course progress and achievement information; and
- Financial billing information.

The following types of sensitive information may also be collected and held:

- Identity details;
- Employee details & HR information;
- Complaint or issue information;
- Disability status & other individual needs;
- Indigenous status; and
- Background checks (such as National Criminal Checks or Working with Children checks).

Where Step123 collects personal information of more vulnerable segment of the community (such as children), additional practices and procedures are also followed. Please refer to Step123's *Working with Children Policy and Procedures* for further information.

#### *How personal information is collected*

Step123's usual approach to collecting personal information is to collect any required information directly from the individuals concerned. This may include the use of forms (such as registration forms, enrolment forms or services delivery records) and the use of web-based systems (such as online enquiry forms, web portals or internal operating systems).

Step123 does receive solicited and unsolicited information from third party sources in undertaking services delivery activities. This may include information from such entities as:

- Governments (Commonwealth, State or Local);
- Employers (and their representatives), Job Network Providers, Schools, Guardians; and
- RTOs such as credit agencies and background check providers.

#### *How personal information is held*

Step123's usual approach to holding personal information includes robust storage and security measures at all times. Information on collection is:

- As soon as practical converted to electronic means;
- Stored in secure, password protected systems, such as financial system, learning management system and student management system; and

- Monitored for appropriate authorized use at all times.

Only authorized personnel are provided with login information to each system, with system access limited to only those relevant to their specific role. Step123 ICT systems are hosted internally with robust internal security to physical server locations and server systems access. Virus protection, backup procedures and ongoing access monitoring procedures are in place.

Destruction of paper-based records occurs as soon as practicable in every matter, through the use of secure shredding and destruction services at all Step123 sites. Individual information held across systems is linked through a Step123 allocated identification number for each individual.

#### *Retention and Destruction of Information*

Step123 maintains a *Retention and Disposal Schedule* documenting the periods for which personal information records are kept. Specifically, for our RTO records, in the event of our organization ceasing to operate the required personal information on record for individuals undertaking nationally recognized training with us would be transferred to the Australian Skills Quality Authority, as required by law.

#### *Accessing and seeking correction of personal information*

Step123 confirms all individuals have a right to request access to their personal information held and to request its correction at any time. In order to request access to personal records, individuals are to make contact with:

**Step123 Privacy Officer Nasir Naqvi**

**3 Lucknow Cres**

**Thomastown VIC 3074**

**03 8528 2682**

**info@step123.edu.au**

A number of third parties, other than the individual, may request access to an individual's personal information. Such third parties may include employers, parents or guardians, schools, Australian Apprenticeships Centers, Governments (Commonwealth, State or Local) and various other stakeholders.

In all cases where access is requested, Step123 ensures that:

- Parties requesting access to personal information are robustly identified and vetted;
- Where legally possible, the individual to whom the information relates will be contacted to confirm consent (if consent not previously provided for the matter); and
- Only appropriately authorized parties, for valid purposes, will be provided access to the information.

#### *Complaints about a breach of the APPs or a binding registered APP code*

If an individual feels that Step123 may have breached one of the APPs or a binding registered APP code, please refer to the *Privacy Complaints Procedure* below for further information on what actions may be taken.

#### *Likely overseas disclosures*

Step123 confirms that individuals' personal information is not disclosed to overseas recipients, for any purpose.

#### *Making our APP Privacy Policy available*

Step123 provides our APP Privacy Policy available free of charge, with all information being publicly available from the Privacy link on our website at [www.step123.edu.au](http://www.step123.edu.au). This website information is designed to be accessible as per web publishing accessibility guidelines, to ensure access is available to individuals with special needs (such as individuals with a vision impairment). In addition, this APP Privacy Policy is:

- Prominently displayed at each Step123's premises;
- Included within our *Student Handbook*;
- Noted within the text or instructions at all information collection points (such as informing individuals during a telephone call of how the policy may be accessed, in cases where information collection is occurring); and
- Available for distribution free of charge on request, as soon as possible after the request is received, including in any particular format requested by the individual as is reasonably practical.

If, in the unlikely event the APP Privacy Policy is not able to be provided in a particular format requested by an individual, we will explain the circumstances around this issue with the requester and seek to ensure that another appropriate method is provided.

#### *Review and Update of this APP Privacy Policy*

Step123 reviews this APP Privacy Policy:

- On an ongoing basis, as suggestions or issues are raised and addressed, or as government required changes are identified;
- Through our internal audit processes on at least an annual basis;
- As a part of any external audit of our operations that may be conducted by various government agencies as a part of our registration as an RTO or in normal business activities; and
- As a component of each and every complaint investigation process where the complaint is related to a privacy matter.

Where this policy is updated, changes to the policy are widely communicated to stakeholders through internal personnel communications, meetings, training and documentation, and externally through publishing of the policy on Step123's website and other relevant documentation (such as our *student Handbook*) for clients.

#### **Australian Privacy Principle 2 – Anonymity and pseudonymity**

Step123 provides individuals with the option of not identifying themselves, or of using a pseudonym, when dealing with us in relation to a particular matter, whenever practical. This includes providing options for anonymous dealings in cases of general course enquiries or other situations in which an individual's information is not required to complete a request.

Individuals may deal with us by using a name, term or descriptor that is different to the individual's actual name wherever possible. This includes using generic email addresses that do not contain an individual's actual name, or generic user names when individuals may access a public component of our website or enquiry forms.

Step123 only stores and links pseudonyms to individual personal information in cases where this is required for

services delivery (such as system login information) or once the individual's consent has been received.

Individuals are advised of their opportunity to deal anonymously or by pseudonym with us where these options are possible.

#### *Requiring identification*

Step123 must require and confirm identification however in services delivery to individuals for nationally recognized course programs. We are authorized by Australian law to deal only with individuals who have appropriately identified themselves. That is, it is a *Condition of Registration* for all RTOs under the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* that we identify individuals and their specific individual needs on commencement of services delivery, and collect and disclose Australian Vocational Education and Training Management of Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) data on all individuals enrolled in nationally recognized training programs. Other legal requirements, as noted earlier in this policy, also require considerable identification arrangements.

There are also other occasions within our services delivery where an individual may not have the option of dealing anonymously or by pseudonym, as identification is required for us to effectively support an individual's request or need.

### **Australian Privacy Principle 3 — Collection of solicited personal information**

Step123 only collects personal information that is reasonably necessary for our business activities.

We only collect sensitive information in cases where the individual consents to the sensitive information being collected, except in cases where we are required to collect this information by law, such as outlined earlier in this policy.

All information we collect is collected only by lawful and fair means. We only collect solicited information directly from the individual concerned, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable for the personal information to only be collected in this manner.

### **Australian Privacy Principle 4 – Dealing with unsolicited personal information**

Step123 may from time to time receive unsolicited personal information. Where this occurs we promptly review the information to decide whether or not we could have collected the information for the purpose of our business activities. Where this is the case, we may hold, use and disclose the information appropriately as per the practices outlined in this policy.

Where we could not have collected this information (by law or for a valid business purpose) we immediately destroy or de-identify the information (unless it would be unlawful to do so).

### **Australian Privacy Principle 5 – Notification of the collection of personal information**

Whenever Step123 collects personal information about an individual, we take reasonable steps to notify the individual of the details of the information collection or otherwise ensure the individual is aware of those matters. This notification occurs at or before the time of collection, or as soon as practicable afterwards.

Our notifications to individuals on data collection include:

- Step123's identity and contact details, including the position title, telephone number and email address of a contact who handles enquiries and requests relating to privacy matters;
- The facts and circumstances of collection such as the date, time, place and method of collection, and whether the information was collected from a third party, including the name of that party;
- If the collection is required or authorized by law, including the name of the Australian law or other legal agreement requiring the collection;
- The purpose of collection, including any primary and secondary purposes;
- The consequences for the individual if all or some personal information is not collected;
- Other organizations or persons to which the information is usually disclosed, including naming those parties;
- Whether we are likely to disclose the personal information to overseas recipients, and if so, the names of the recipients and the countries in which such recipients are located.
- A link to this APP Privacy Policy on our website or explain how it may be accessed; and
- Advice that this APP Privacy Policy contains information about how the individual may access and seek correction of the personal information held by us; and how to complain about a breach of the APPs, or any registered APP code, and how we will deal with such a complaint.

Where possible, we ensure that the individual confirms their understanding of these details, such as through signed declarations, website form acceptance of details or in person through questioning.

### *Collection from third parties*

Where Step123 collects personal information from another organization, we:

1. Confirm whether the other organization has provided the relevant notice above to the individual; or
2. Whether the individual was otherwise aware of these details at the time of collection; and
3. If this has not occurred, we will undertake this notice to ensure the individual is fully informed of the information collection.

### **Australian Privacy Principle 6 – Use or disclosure of personal information**

Step123 only uses or discloses personal information it holds about an individual for the particular primary purposes for which the information was collected, or secondary purposes in cases where:

- An individual consented to a secondary use or disclosure;
- An individual would reasonably expect the secondary use or disclosure, and that is directly related to the primary purpose of collection; or
- Using or disclosing the information is required or authorized by law.

#### *Requirement to make a written note of use or disclosure for this secondary purpose*

If Step123 uses or discloses personal information in accordance with an 'enforcement related activity' we will make a written note of the use or disclosure, including the following details:

- The date of the use or disclosure;
- Details of the personal information that was used or disclosed;
- The enforcement body conducting the enforcement related activity;
- If the organization used the information, how the information was used by the organization;
- The basis for our reasonable belief that we were required to disclose the information.

### **Australian Privacy Principle 7 – Direct marketing**

Step123 does not use or disclose the personal information that it holds about an individual for the purpose of direct marketing, unless:

- The personal information has been collected directly from an individual, and the individual would reasonably expect their personal information to be used for the purpose of direct marketing; or
- The personal information has been collected from a third party, or from the individual directly, but the individual does not have a reasonable expectation that their personal information will be used for the purpose of direct marketing; and
- We provide a simple method for the individual to request not to receive direct marketing communications (also known as 'opting out').

On each of our direct marketing communications, Step123 provides a prominent statement that the individual may request to opt out of future communications, and how to do so. An individual may also request us at any stage not to use or disclose their personal information for the purpose of direct marketing, or to facilitate direct marketing by other organizations. We comply with any request by an individual promptly and undertake any required actions for free.

We also, on request, notify an individual of our source of their personal information used or disclosed for the purpose of direct marketing unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so.

### **Australian Privacy Principle 8 – Cross-border disclosure of personal information**

Before Step123 discloses personal information about an individual to any overseas recipient, we take reasonable steps to ensure that the recipient does not breach any privacy matters in relation to that information.

### **Australian Privacy Principle 9 – Adoption, use or disclosure of government related identifiers**

Step123 does not adopt, use or disclose a government related identifier related to an individual except:



- In situations required by Australian law or other legal requirements;
- Where reasonably necessary to verify the identity of the individual;
- Where reasonably necessary to fulfil obligations to an agency or a State or Territory authority; or
- As prescribed by regulations.

### **Australian Privacy Principle 10 – Quality of personal information**

Step123 takes reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information it collects is accurate, up-to-date and complete. We also take reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information we use or disclose is, having regard to the purpose of the use or disclosure, accurate, up-to-date, complete and relevant. This is particularly important:

- When we initially collect the personal information; and
- When we use or disclose personal information.

We take steps to ensure personal information is factually correct. In cases of an opinion, we ensure information takes into account competing facts and views and makes an informed assessment, providing it is clear this is an opinion. Information is confirmed up-to-date at the point in time to which the personal information relates.

Quality measures in place supporting these requirements include:

- Internal practices, procedures and systems to audit, monitor, identify and correct poor quality personal information (including training personnel in these practices, procedures and systems);
- Protocols that ensure personal information is collected and recorded in a consistent format, from a primary information source where possible;
- Ensuring updated or new personal information is promptly added to relevant existing records;
- Providing individuals with a simple means to review and update their information on an on-going basis;
- Reminding individuals to update their personal information at critical services delivery points (such as completion) when we engage with the individual;
- Contacting individuals to verify the quality of personal information where appropriate when it is about to be used or disclosed, particularly if there has been a lengthy period since collection; and
- Checking that a third party, from whom personal information is collected, has implemented appropriate data quality practices, procedures and systems.

### **Australian Privacy Principle 11 — Security of personal information**

Step123 takes active measures to consider whether we are able to retain personal information we hold, and also to ensure the security of personal information we hold. This includes reasonable steps to protect the information from misuse, interference and loss, as well as unauthorized access, modification or disclosure.

We destroy or de-identify personal information held once the information is no longer needed for any purpose for which the information may be legally used or disclosed.

Access to Step123 offices and work areas is limited to our personnel only - visitors to our premises must be authorized by relevant personnel and are accompanied at all times. With regard to any information in a paper-based form, we maintain storage of records in an appropriately secure place to which only authorized individuals have access.

Regular personnel training and information bulletins are conducted with Step123 personnel on privacy issues, and how the APPs apply to our practices, procedures and systems. Training is also included in our personnel induction practices.

We conduct ongoing internal audits (at least annually and as needed) of the adequacy and currency of security and access practices, procedures and systems implemented.

**Australian Privacy Principle 12 — Access to personal information**

Where Step123 holds personal information about an individual, we provide that individual access to the information on their request. In processing requests, we:

- Ensure through confirmation of identity that the request is made by the individual concerned, or by another person who is authorized to make a request on their behalf;
- Respond to a request for access:
  - Within 14 calendar days, when notifying our refusal to give access, including providing reasons for refusal in writing, and the complaint mechanisms available to the individual; or
  - Within 30 calendar days, by giving access to the personal information that is requested in the manner in which it was requested.
- Provide information access free of charge.

**Australian Privacy Principle 13 – Correction of personal information**

Step123 takes reasonable steps to correct personal information we hold, to ensure it is accurate, up-to-date, complete, relevant and not misleading, having regard to the purpose for which it is held.

***Individual Requests***

On an individual's request, we:

- Correct personal information held; and
- Notify any third parties of corrections made to personal information, if this information was previously provided to these parties.

In cases where we refuse to update personal information, we:

- Give a written notice to the individual, including the reasons for the refusal and the complaint mechanisms available to the individual;
- Upon request by the individual whose correction request has been refused, take reasonable steps to associate a statement with the personal information that the individual believes it to be inaccurate, out-of-date, incomplete, irrelevant or misleading;
- Respond within 14 calendar days to these requests; and
- Complete all actions free of charge.

***Correcting at Step123's initiative***

We take reasonable steps to correct personal information we hold in cases where we are satisfied that the personal information held is inaccurate, out-of-date, incomplete, irrelevant or misleading (that is, the information is faulty). This awareness may occur through collection of updated information, in notification from third parties or through other means.

**Request for Records Access**

Individuals or third parties may at any stage request access to records held by Step123 relating to their personal information. The following procedure is followed on each individual request for access:

1. A request for access is provided by the requester, with suitable information provided to be able to:
  - a. Identify the individual concerned;
  - b. Confirm their identity; and
  - c. Identify the specific information that they are requesting access to.
2. This request may be in any form, or preferably using Step123's *Records Access or Update Request Form*.
3. Upon receiving a request for access, Step123 then:
  - a. Confirms the identity of the individual or party requesting access;



- b. Confirms that this individual or party is appropriately authorized to receive the information requested;
- c. Searches the records that we possess or control to assess whether the requested *personal information* is contained in those records; and
- d. Collates any personal information found ready for access to be provided.

### *Confirming identity*

Step123 personnel must be satisfied that a request for personal information is made by the individual concerned, or by another person who is authorized to make a request on their behalf. The minimum amount of

personal information needed to establish an individual's identity is sought, which is generally an individual's name, date of birth, last known address and signature.

When meeting the requesting party in person, identification may be sighted.

If confirming details over a telephone conversation, questions regarding the individual's name, date of birth, last

known address or service details must be confirmed before information is provided.

4. Once identity and access authorization is confirmed, and personal information is collated, access is provided to the requester within 30 calendar days of receipt of the original request. We will provide access to personal information in the specific manner or format requested by the individual, wherever it is reasonable and practicable to do so, free of charge.

Where the requested format is not practical, we consult with the requester to ensure a format is provided that meets the requester's needs.

5. If the identity or authorization access cannot be confirmed, or there is another valid reason why Step123 is unable to provide the personal information, refusal to provide access to records will be provided to the requester, in writing. Our notification will include reason(s) for the refusal, and the complaint mechanisms available to the individual. Such notifications are provided to the requester within 30 calendar days of receipt of the original request.

### **Request for Records Update**

Individuals or third parties may at any stage request that their records held by Step123 relating to their personal information be updated. The following procedure is followed on each individual request for records updates:

1. A request for records update is provided by the requester, with suitable information provided to be able to:
  - a. Identify the individual concerned;
  - b. Confirm their identity; and
  - c. Identify the specific information that they are requesting be updated on their records.

This request may be in any form, or preferably using Step123's *Records Access or Update Request Form*.

2. Upon receiving a request for records update, Step123 then:
  - a. Confirms the identity of the individual or party to whom the record relates;
  - b. Searches the records that we possess or control to assess whether the requested *personal information* is contained in those records; and
  - c. Assesses the information already on record, and the requested update, to determine whether the requested update should proceed.

### *Assessing Update*

Step123 personnel assess the relevant personal information we hold, and the requested updated information, to determine which version of the information is considered accurate, up-to-date, complete, relevant and not misleading, having regard to the purpose for which it is held.

This may include checking information against other records held by us, or within government databases, in order to complete an assessment of the correct version of the information to be used.

3. Once identity and information assessment is confirmed, personal information is:
  - a. Updated, free of charge, within 14 calendar days of receipt of the original request; and
  - b. Notified to any third parties of corrections made to personal information, if this information was previously provided to these parties.
4. If the identity of the individual cannot be confirmed, or there is another valid reason why Step123 is unable to update the personal information, refusal to update records will be provided to the requester in writing, free of charge, within 14 calendar days. Our notification will include the reasons for the refusal and the complaint mechanisms available to the individual.
5. Upon request by the individual whose correction request has been refused, we will also take reasonable steps to associate a 'statement' with the personal information that the individual believes it to be inaccurate, out-of-date, incomplete, irrelevant or misleading. This statement will be applied, free of charge, to all personal information relevant across Step123 systems within 30 calendar days of receipt of the statement request.

### **Privacy Complaints**

If an individual feels that Step123 has breached its obligations in the handling, use or disclosure of their personal information, they may raise a complaint. We encourage individuals to discuss the situation with their Step123 representative in the first instance, before making a complaint.

The complaints handling process is as follows:

1. The individual should make the complaint including as much detail about the issue as possible, in writing to Step123:

Chief Executive Officer Nasir Naqvi  
3 Lucknow Cres  
Thomastown VIC 3074  
03 8528 2682  
[info@step123.edu.au](mailto:info@step123.edu.au)
2. Step123 will investigate the circumstances included in the complaint and respond to the individual as soon as possible (and within 30 calendar days) regarding its findings and actions following this investigation.
3. After considering this response, if the individual is still not satisfied they may escalate their complaint directly to the Information Commissioner for investigation:

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner:

[www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au) Phone: 1300 363 992

When investigating a complaint, the OAIC will initially attempt to conciliate the complaint, before considering the exercise of other complaint resolution powers.

4. Alternatively, if the complaint relates to a non-privacy matter, or should individuals choose to do so, a complaint may also be lodged with the ASQA complaints handling service for complaints against RTOs:

Australian Skills Quality Authority [www.asqa.gov.au](http://www.asqa.gov.au)

Phone: 1300 701 801

## Quality

*Quality* means meeting or exceeding conformance with any required regulatory standards and also client expectations and requirements. Step123 is committed to ensuring it is able to provide quality training and assessment services. Systematic monitoring of internal systems, strategies and practices allows Step123 to quickly respond to changes in the marketplace or stakeholder expectations.

Step123 ensures it complies with the *VET Quality Framework and Standards for RTO's 2015* at all times, including where services are being delivered on its behalf. This applies to all operations of Step123s scope of registration.

<http://www.asqa.gov.au/vet-registration>

## Systematic Service Reviews

Step123 systematically monitors its training and assessment strategies and practices to ensure ongoing compliance with the *VET Quality Framework and Standards for RTO's 2015* for all training product services.

## Continuous Improvement Process

*Continuous improvement* is the progressive step by step improvement of every aspect of work. Steps may often be small, achieving impact by the sheer weight of accumulation. Improvements should be cost efficient and any improvement should not transfer work to another area. The major focus of continuous improvement is to improve quality.

The primary focus of continuous improvement at Step123 is on the prevention of errors before they occur, rather than their correction afterwards. Step123's risk management process examines tasks and work processes with the aim of eliminating errors, waste and inconsistency.

The basis for implementation of Step123's continuous improvement process includes:

- Prevention of errors rather than correction;
- Identification and elimination of waste;
- Identifying the need to improve inputs;
- Focus on improvement at every step in the process;
- Understanding of inconsistency;
- Importance of small step improvements;
- Involvement of all personnel;
- Empowerment of personnel participation; and
- Importance of measurement.

The process of continuous improvement involves personnel at all levels and provides employees with an 'ownership' of the activity, whether this be at an operational, supervisory or managerial level.

## Access and Equity

In line with obligations under Commonwealth legislation, Step123 is committed to promoting a fair and equitable environment for personnel and clients that is free from discrimination, harassment and vilification.

*Access and equity* means policies and approaches aimed at ensuring that VET is responsive to the individual needs of clients whose age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability, sexuality, language skills, literacy or numeracy level, unemployment, imprisonment or remote location may present a barrier to access, participation and the achievement of suitable outcomes.

*Access and Equity principles* include:

- Equity for all Individuals through the fair and appropriate allocation of resources;

- Equality of opportunity for all Individuals without discrimination;
- Access for all Individuals to appropriate quality training and assessment services; and
- Increased opportunity for Individuals to participate in training.

*Disadvantaged groups* include the following groups who traditionally have been under-represented in Vocational Education and Training:

- Individuals with a disability;
- Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders;
- Women;
- Individuals from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- Individuals in rural and remote areas; and
- Long term unemployed.

Step123 is committed to complying with Commonwealth and State legislation and policies regarding access, equity and cultural diversity. This legislation includes the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* and the *Anti-Discrimination Act (1998)*.

Step123 also maintains compliance with the *Disability Standards for Education (2005)* including processes relating to:

- Enrolment;
- Participation;
- Curriculum development, accreditation and delivery;
- student support services; and
- Elimination of harassment and victimization.

Step123 strives to maximize opportunities for access, participation and outcomes for all students within the vocational education, training and employment system.

## **Integrity and Fairness**

Step123 promotes public confidence by:

- Committing to the highest ethical standards:
  - Ensuring its behavior and decision making is ethical.
  - Observing procedural fairness in their decision-making processes.
  - Engaging with students, clients and the community in a manner that is consultative, respectful and fair.
  - Meeting obligations to act on suspected wrongdoing, including conduct not consistent with this Statement.

Step123 respects the rights and dignity of students and clients by:

- Having processes in place to ensure students and clients are adequately informed of their rights.
- Being sensitive to the specific cultural and social needs of all students and clients.
- Ensuring students receive adequate orientation, appropriate information and advice on student services available when difficulties arise.
- Having processes in place to ensure training staff act with integrity in all dealings with students and clients.
- Committing to the principles of access and equity in the delivery of services.

Step123 is committed to honest, fair and respectful engagement with students, business, industry and the community by:

- Engaging in open communication with all students, including assisting those with disabilities, non-English speaking backgrounds and Low Socio-economic Background to contribute to, and provide feedback on, the progress of their training.
- Listening and responding to issues and concerns raised by students, business, industry and the community about training courses and provider performance.
- Consulting with students, business, industry and the community in the development of training courses, improvement of training quality and system responsiveness.

- Engaging with government stakeholders in consultation processes to improve training quality and system responsiveness.

Step123 avoids conflicts between private interests and professional responsibilities by:

- Identifying, declaring and avoiding any apparent conflict of interest.
- Having processes in place to manage potential conflicts of interest.
- Ensuring that any conflict of interest is resolved in the public interest.

#### **Equal benefits & opportunity**

Step123 treats all students and all individuals seeking to enroll equally and fairly. Step123 has implemented open, fair and transparent procedures that are based on merit for making decisions about:

- The selection of individuals who seek to enroll; and
- The treatment of individuals undertaking courses.

Step123 undertakes to identify and, where possible, remove barriers that prevent individuals from accessing and participating in our services. Step123 is committed to treating all prospective and actual students *on the same basis*.

### **1.8.3. On the same basis**

A person with a disability is able to seek admission to, or apply for enrolment in, an institution on the same basis as a prospective student without a disability if the person has opportunities and choices in admission or enrolment that are comparable with those offered to other prospective student without disabilities.

Step123 ensures it treats prospective students with a disability on the same basis as prospective students without a disability as it makes any decisions about admission or enrolment on the basis that *reasonable adjustments* will be provided.

An *adjustment* is a measure or action (or a group of measures or actions) taken by Step123 that has the effect of assisting a student with a disability:

- In relation to an admission or enrolment — to apply for the admission or enrolment;
- In relation to a course or program — to participate in the course or program; and
- In relation to facilities or services — to use the facilities or services;

On the same basis as a student without a disability, and includes an aid, a facility, or a service that the student requires because of his or her disability.

### **1.8.4. Reasonable adjustments**

An adjustment is reasonable in relation to a student with a disability if it balances the interests of all parties affected. In assessing whether a particular adjustment for a student is *reasonable*, Step123 has regard to all the relevant circumstances and interests, including the following:

- The student's disability;
- The views of the student or the student's associate;
- The effect of the adjustment on the student, including the effect on the student's:
  - Ability to achieve learning outcomes; and
  - Ability to participate in courses or programs; and
  - Independence;
- The effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected including Step123 personnel and other students; and
- The costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

## Student Rights and Step123 Responsibilities

### Enrolment

Students' Rights	Step123 Responsibilities
Right to seek admission and enroll on the same basis as prospective students without a disability or disadvantage including the right to reasonable adjustments.	<p>Take reasonable steps to ensure that the enrolment process is accessible.</p> <p>Consider students with a disability or disadvantage in the same way as students without disability or disadvantage when deciding to offer a place.</p> <p>Consult with the prospective students or their associates about the effect of the disability or disadvantage on their ability to seek enrolment; and any reasonable adjustments necessary.</p>

### Participation

Students' Rights	Step123 Responsibilities
Right to access courses and programs; use services and facilities; and have reasonable adjustments, to ensure students with a disability or disadvantage are able to participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disability or disadvantage.	<p>Take reasonable steps to ensure participation.</p> <p>Consult with the student or their associate about the effect of the disability or disadvantage on their ability to participate.</p> <p>Make a reasonable adjustment if necessary.</p> <p>Repeating this process over time as necessary.</p>

### Curriculum Development, Accreditation and Delivery

Students' Rights	Step123 Responsibilities
Right to participate in courses and relevant supplementary programs that are designed to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, on the same basis as students without a disability or disadvantage and to have reasonable adjustments to ensure they are able to participate in education and training.	<p>Enable students with a disability or disadvantage to participate in learning experiences (including assessment and certification).</p> <p>Consult with the student or their associate.</p> <p>Take into consideration whether the disability or disadvantage affects the student's ability to participate in the learning experiences.</p>

## Student Support Services

Students' Rights	Step123 Responsibilities
Right to access student support services provided by education institutions, on the same basis as students without a disability or disadvantage. Students with a disability or disadvantage have the right to specialized services needed to participate in the educational activities they are enrolled in.	<p>Ensure that students with a disability or disadvantage are able to use general support services.</p> <p>Ensure that students have access to specialized support services.</p> <p>Facilitate the provision of specialized support services.</p>

## Harassment & Victimization

Students' Rights	Step123 Responsibilities
Right to education and training in an environment that is free from discrimination caused by harassment and victimization on the basis of their disability or disadvantage.	<p>Implement strategies to prevent harassment or victimization.</p> <p>Take reasonable steps to ensure that personnel and students are informed about their obligation not to harass or victimize students with a disability or disadvantage.</p> <p>Take appropriate action if harassment or victimization occurs.</p> <p>Ensure complaint mechanisms are available to students.</p>

## Process for Considering Adjustments

Step123 provides equitable access to all required educational and support services, so that no student is disadvantaged regardless of their mode of study or location. Where there may be limitations regarding access to these resources, Step123 provides clear advice in pre-enrolment information so all clients can make an informed choice about which RTO and course of study best meets their needs.

Step123 embraces the responsibility of ensuring that all personnel acquire the knowledge and skills to relate to students without direct or indirect discrimination. All personnel are aware of and know how to use available Step123 or external resources or be able to confidently refer students to appropriate tutoring and community support services.

All personnel continue to expand their knowledge or access and equity issues through induction processes when joining Step123, and in structured professional development on a regular basis (at least annually) in access and equity issues and resources.

Step123 personnel have access to a range of access and equity materials designed to assist students in undertaking and completing courses and qualifications.

In assessing whether an adjustment to the course of the course or program in which the student is enrolled, or proposes to be enrolled, is reasonable, Step123 is entitled to maintain the academic requirements of the course or program, and other requirements or components that are inherent in or essential to its nature.



### **1.8.5. Consulting the student**

Before Step123 makes an adjustment for the student, the student or their associate is consulted about:

- Whether the adjustment is reasonable; and
- The extent to which the adjustment would achieve the aims in relation to the student; and
- Whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that would be less disruptive and intrusive and no less beneficial for the student.

### **1.8.6. Deciding on an adjustment to be made**

In deciding whether to make a particular reasonable adjustment for a student, Step123:

- Assesses whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that would be less disruptive and intrusive and no less beneficial for the student; and
- Assesses whether the adjustment may need to be changed over the period of a student's education or training.

A detailed assessment, which might include an independent expert assessment, may be required in order to determine what adjustments are necessary for a student. The type and extent of the adjustments may vary depending on the individual requirements of the student and other relevant circumstances. Multiple adjustments may be required and may include multiple activities.

### **1.8.7. Assessing reasonable adjustments**

In assessing whether a particular adjustment is reasonable for the student with a disability, Step123 takes into account:

- The nature of the student's disability;
- The information provided by, or on behalf of, the student about how the disability affects the student's ability to participate;
- Views of the student, or an associate of the student, about whether a proposed adjustment is reasonable and will enable the student with a disability to access and participate in education and training opportunities on the same basis as students without disabilities;
- Information provided by, or on behalf of, the student about his or her preferred adjustments;
- The effect of the proposed adjustment on the student, including the student's ability to participate in courses or programs and achieve learning outcomes;
- The effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including Step123 operations, personnel and other students; and
- The costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

In making a reasonable adjustment, Step123 ensures that the integrity of the course or program and assessment requirements and processes are maintained.

Step123 acts upon information about an adjustment in a timely way that optimizes the student's participation in education or training.

In meeting its obligations to provide reasonable adjustments, Step123 may provide an alternative adjustment to the student's preferred form of adjustment, if the alternative is effective in achieving the desired purpose.

### **Unjustifiable Hardship**

Once a reasonable adjustment has been determined, Step123 may consider if the adjustment would impose unjustifiable hardship on its operations.

In determining what constitutes unjustifiable hardship, all relevant circumstances *of the particular case* are taken into account including:

- The nature of the benefit or detriment likely to accrue or be suffered by any persons concerned; and



- The effect of the disability of a person concerned; and
- The financial circumstances and the estimated amount of expenditure required to be made by the person claiming unjustifiable hardship.

In determining whether unjustifiable hardship applies, Step123:

- Takes into account information about the nature of the student's disability, his or her preferred adjustment, any adjustments that have been provided previously and any recommended or alternative adjustments. This information may be provided by the student, an associate of the student or independent experts (or a combination of those persons);
- Ensures that timely information is available to the student, or an associate of the student about the processes for determining whether the proposed adjustment would cause unjustifiable hardship; and
- Ensures that these processes maintain the dignity, respect, privacy and confidentiality of the student and the associates of the student, consistent with the rights of the rest of the community.

Where a claim of unjustifiable hardship is made, Step123 has taken into account all the financial and other resources that are reasonably available for the purpose of making any necessary adjustments for the student, and the impact of those adjustments on its capacity to provide education of high quality to all students while remaining financially viable.

Step123 considers all costs and benefits both direct and indirect that are likely to result, the student and any associates of the student, and any other persons in the learning or wider community, including:

- Costs associated with additional personnel, the provision of special resources or modification of the curriculum;
- Costs resulting from the student's participation in the learning environment, including any adverse impact on learning and social outcomes for the student, other students and teachers; and
- Benefits deriving from the student's participation in the learning environment, including positive learning and social outcomes for the student, other students and teachers, and any financial incentives, such as subsidies or grants, available to the provider as a result of the student's participation.

Where Step123 decides to rely on unjustifiable hardship, it ensures that a notice stating the decision and the reasons for the decision is given to the student, or an associate of the student, as soon as practicable after the decision is made.

### **1.8.8. Implementing Reasonable Adjustments**

Step123 takes reasonable steps to ensure that any adjustment required to be made is made within a reasonable time. Whether the time is reasonable depends, in particular, on whether and when the student, or his or her associate, has provided:

- In a timely way, any relevant information in the possession of the student or associate about how the disability affects the student in relation to education or training; and
- The student's or the associate's opinion about the matters.

Where reasonable adjustments are implemented, a detailed training and assessment plan including timetables, notes regarding the required adjustments, and any related communications regarding the adjustments is maintained in the student's file.

Key training and assessment strategies for supporting individual needs include:

- Knowing and respecting students: Understanding students are time poor; communicate with them, embrace and integrate their diversity and enable contributions of their knowledge to everyone's learning;
- Offering flexibility, variety and choice: While upholding academic standards, offer students flexibility, choice in assessment and variety in teaching and learning strategies;
- Making expectations clear, using accessible language: Speak and write in plain language to ensure students understand the concepts being taught, your expectations of them and what is required to be a successful student;
- Scaffolding students' learning: Take a step-by-step approach to training to ensure students build on what they bring to the course and are taught the particular discourses necessary to succeed;

- Being available and approachable to guide student learning: In addition to being available, be approachable so that students may make use of RTO personnel expertise and guidance to improve their learning and performance; and
- Supporting reflective practice: Reflect and seek to act on reflections, those from peers and feedback from students, to continuously improve training practice and students' learning.

## Reasonable Adjustments

Type of disability or disadvantage	Example reasonable adjustments
Mobility impairment	Provision of wheelchair accessibility; access to aids such as for holding documents, adjustable tables, note taking support, oral rather than written presentations or exams; use of a personal computer; lifting limits.
Vision impairment	Use of audio recordings, enlarged text and images, enlarged computer screen images; use of voice synthesizers on computers; good lighting or reading lamps; braille translations; provision for guide dogs; avoid moving furniture without informing the person; provision of additional writing time for assignments/tests.
Hearing impairment	Use of teletext; audio loops for individuals using hearing aids; use of Plain English documents; sign language interpreters for training and assessment.
Intellectual disability	Practical learning sessions; repetition of learning exercises; use of Plain English documents; use of mentors; assessment that is appropriate to the skill, i.e., avoiding written test for practical tasks; provision of additional time.
Psychiatric disability	Use of reflective listening skills; identification and avoidance of stresses; use of ongoing rather than formal assessments; providing 'time-out' breaks in assessment.
Individuals with acquired brain injury	Provision of time and patience during training and assessment; use of reflective listening skills; provision of memory aids, e.g., posters, notes; minimization of stress.
Speech impairment	Provision of time and patience; paraphrasing; get individuals to put things in writing; minimize stress.

Non-English-speaking background	Provision of learning materials, texts and handouts ahead of the class; modify the presentation medium for example, visual, oral, print, demonstration; provision of practice opportunities; use of generic, inclusive terms when constructing learning activities; substitution of alternative tasks where existing ones pose a problem; extend or modify timeframes for assessment; ensure the language of assessment instruments does not create barriers; provision of customized delivery schedule, provision of one on one coaching sessions.
Mature age	Provision of customized delivery schedule, provision of one-on-one coaching sessions; extend or modify timeframes for assessment; use of paper-based resources; use of phone communication as preferred method.

## Reasonable Adjustments

Type of disability or disadvantage	Example reasonable adjustments
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	Provision of customized delivery schedule, provision of one-on-one coaching sessions; extend or modify timeframes for assessment; use of paper-based resources; use of phone communication as preferred method; provision of learning materials, texts and handouts ahead of the class; modify the presentation medium for example, visual, oral, print, demonstration; provide practice opportunities; use of generic, inclusive terms when constructing learning activities.
Low socio - economic background	Provision of customized delivery schedule, provision of one-on-one coaching sessions; extend or modify timeframes for assessment; use of paper-based resources; use of phone communication as preferred method; provision of learning materials, texts and handouts ahead of the class; modify the presentation medium for example, visual, oral, print, demonstration; provide practice opportunities; use of generic, inclusive terms when constructing learning activities

## Support Services

The following support services are available and accessible for all students studying with Step123. Step123 will provide students with contact details to refer any matters that require further follow up with relevant professionals.

### Referral Service Available

### Contact Details

<p><b>Lifeline</b></p> <p>Lifeline provides all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to online, phone and face-to-face crisis support and suicide prevention services. Find out how these services can help you, a friend or loved one.</p>	<p>Phone: 13 11 14</p>
<p><b>Kids Helpline</b></p> <p>If you're between 5 and 25 and you're feeling depressed, worried, sad, angry or confused about things like your study's personal relationships, Kids Helpline offers free 24 hour, 7-day telephone counselling support (anonymous if you prefer).</p>	<p>Phone: 1800 551 800</p>
<p><b>Drug Info</b></p> <p>Drug Info is a service provided by the Australian Drug Foundation that offers information about alcohol and other drugs and prevention of related harms</p>	<p>Phone: 1300 85 85 84  <a href="http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/contact-numbers/help-and-support">www.druginfo.adf.org.au/contact-numbers/help-and-support</a></p>
<p><b>Reading and Writing Hotline</b></p> <p>For the price of a local call anywhere in Australia, the Hotline can provide you with advice and a referral to one of 1200 providers of courses in adult literacy and numeracy.</p>	<p>Phone: 1300 655 506  <a href="http://www.readingwritinghotline.edu.au">www.readingwritinghotline.edu.au</a></p>
Referral Service Available	
Contact Details	
<p><b>Centrelink</b></p>	<p>Phone: 1800 057 111  <a href="http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink">www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink</a></p>

## Discrimination

Discrimination can be direct, indirect or systemic.

*Direct discrimination* is any action which specifically excludes a person or group of Individuals from a benefit or opportunity, or significantly reduces their chances of obtaining it, because their status or personal characteristics, irrelevant to the situation (e.g., sex, ethnic origin) are applied as a barrier. Direct discrimination has as a focus assumed differences between Individuals.

*Indirect discrimination* is the outcome of rules, practices and decisions which treat Individuals equally and therefore appear to be neutral; but which, in fact, perpetuate an initially unequal situation and therefore significantly reduce a person's chances of obtaining or retaining a benefit or opportunity. Rules, practices and decisions are applied to all groups alike but it is the very assumption of a likeness that constitutes the discrimination.

*Systemic discrimination* is system of discrimination perpetuated by rules, practices and decisions which are realized in actions that are discriminatory and disadvantage a group of Individuals because of their status or characteristics and serve to advantage others of different status or characteristics. Direct and indirect discrimination contribute to systemic discrimination.

### **1.8.9. Bullying & Harassment**

*Bullying* is repeated, unreasonable behavior directed towards an individual or a group of individuals that creates a risk to health and safety and is unlawful. Repeated behavior refers to the persistent nature of the behavior and can involve a range of behaviors over time.

*Unreasonable behavior* means behavior that a reasonable person, having regard for the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behavior that is victimizing, humiliating intimidating or threatening. Examples of bullying may include (but are not limited to):

- A manager or supervisor using a management style that is harsh, involves shouting, constant criticism or humiliation of an individual or group of individuals in private or in front of their peers;
- An individual being treated less favorably by another individual or group of individual, including, but not limited to, bullying or intimidation; forcing an individual to participate in an “initiation” process; the playing of practical jokes or forcing an individual to undertake demeaning tasks;
- Sniggering or gossiping behind someone’s back;
- Laughing at someone which is intended to make them feel uncomfortable or distressed;
- A manager setting unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines for an individual to meet, or setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person’s skill level; and/or
- Continuously and deliberately excluding someone from workplace activities including ignoring or keeping individuals isolated from relevant communications about work issues.

Step123 is committed to providing a workplace and client services which are free from bullying, harassment and unlawful discrimination. Step123 aims to ensure all those participating in the workplace and services are treated with respect, dignity and fairness with an aim of creating an environment which promotes positive working relationships.

Step123 ensures that all stakeholders understand what will be regarded as bullying, how complaints of bullying can be made and how claims will be treated. This applies to all personnel, agents and clients engaging in Step123’s services.

Step123 expectations are not limited to the workplace or working hours, and will include all work-related events which includes, but is not limited to; lunches, client functions, meetings and conferences as well as social events.

Step123 expectations relate to, but are not limited by the following types of communication:

- Verbal communication either over the telephone or in person in the workplace, and outside of it;
- Written communication including; letters, notes, minutes of meetings etc.;
- Internal and external electronic communication including:
  - Email;
  - Instant messaging services;
  - Internal intranet;
  - Faxes;
  - Social media and networking forums including; Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other forms of social media; and
  - Communications via text message.

In line with Step123’s commitment to creating a workplace which is free from workplace health and safety risks and one which strives to create positive working relationships, all individuals are expected to observe the following minimum standards of behavior, including:

- Being polite and courteous to others;
- Being respectful of the differences between Individuals and their circumstances;
- Ensuring they do not engage in any bullying behavior(s) towards others in, or connected with the workplace which includes all individuals;
- Ensuring they do not assist, or encourage others in the workplace, or in connection with the workplace to engage in bullying behavior(s) of any type;
- Adhering to the complaint procedure if they experience any bullying behavior(s) personally;
- Reporting any bullying behavior(s) they see happening to others in the workplace, or connected with the

- workplace in line with the complaint procedure; and
  - Keeping information confidential if involved in any investigation of bullying.
- Fair and reasonable management action taken in order to counsel an individual for instances of underperformance, investigating complaints made against personnel, discipline for misconduct and other work directions in line with business needs does not amount to bullying.
- All individuals are expected to adhere to the standards of behavior contained herein at all times. Any individual who is found to have breached these expectations will be disciplined accordingly, which may lead up to, and include termination of employment. If a contractor of Step123 is found to have breached these expectations, their contract stands to be terminated, or may not be renewed in the future.

### **Equity & Bullying Complaints**

Any individual who believes that they have been subject to actions or words that may constitute discrimination or bullying should act upon such bullying as soon as possible by following the procedure set out below. Individuals who believe they have witnessed discriminatory or bullying behavior by another individual in the workplace are also able to make complaints.

In the first instance, the aggrieved individual should, wherever practicable and if they feel comfortable doing so, attempt to amicably resolve the matter with the individual(s) who are alleged to have engaged in bullying. When confronting the issue, the individual should clearly state the offensive behavior experienced, explain that the behavior is unwelcome and offensive and ask that the behavior does not continue. The person may not be aware that their behavior or conduct was causing offense or was unwelcome.

This is not a compulsory part of the complaint procedure, and if an individual does not wish to confront the person directly, then this is not encouraged.

Where the alleged bullying involves the individual's direct manager and it is not practical for them to directly resolve the matter, they shall immediately notify the Chief Executive Officer who, with the individual's approval will endeavor to investigate and resolve the matter on an informal basis in accordance with the procedure set out below.

### **1.8.10. Informal Complaint Procedure**

An informal complaint procedure includes a range of alternatives which can be applied in a flexible manner in order to address different complaints in consideration of the relevant circumstances. The informal complaint procedure is intended to be used for less serious allegations of bullying and instances which generally do not warrant disciplinary action being taken. An individual who is unsure of whether or not to make a formal or informal complaint may make an informal complaint first and decide if they want to escalate the complaint to a formal complaint.

Different options for handling informal complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- Step123 relevant manager having a conversation with the alleged bully about the behavior complained of; and
- Step123 relevant manager having a meeting with the individuals concerned in an attempt to reach a resolution.

### **1.8.11. Formal Complaint Procedure**

Where an individual wishes to lodge a formal complaint, they will be required to do so by communicating this in writing to the Chief Executive Officer.

A written complaint shall include the names of individuals concerned, details of the incident(s) and the names of any witnesses present.

Where a written complaint has been lodged, a formal investigation procedure will commence



immediately. Formal investigations may be conducted by the Chief Executive Officer or an external person who is appointed by Step123  
e.g., an independent mediator.

Regardless of whether the investigation is carried out by a Step123 personnel member, or by an independent body/person, the investigator will aim to follow the procedure set out below:

- Clarify details of what took place and ensure that all necessary information is obtained;
- Identify the outcome the complainant is seeking;
- Discuss with the complainant their legal rights, including lodging a formal complaint with the relevant state or federal tribunal;
- Discuss the complaint made with the person/s accused of bullying; and
- Making a determination as to whether the alleged behavior occurred and if it constituted bullying.

If Step123 feels it is appropriate in the interests of health and safety of individuals concerned, and / or the efficiency of the investigation process, individuals may be requested to refrain from attending work / course services for a period of time whilst the investigation is underway. Alternatively, individuals may be given different duties or work to perform while the investigation is being conducted. Employees who are requested to do either of these will be paid at their normal rate of pay during this period.

Where it becomes apparent that the complaint made relates to conduct which constitutes misconduct or otherwise warrants disciplinary action, the investigator is to refer to the *Discipline* section of this manual for further action and resolution.

Whilst the investigator will endeavor to preserve the confidentiality of the complainant and the person complained of, it may be necessary to speak with other workers or Individuals involved to determine what happened and to maintain the integrity of the investigation process.

Where potentially unlawful conduct has occurred, Step123 will alert the appropriate authorities. Those Individuals who are involved in the complaint (including the complainant, witnesses etc.) are also under a duty to maintain confidentiality and display a commitment to uphold the integrity of the investigation process. If the complainant chooses to bring a support person with them to any meetings, they too are bound by confidentiality.

Gossiping and/or the spreading of rumors as a result of, or in connection with, a process followed under this policy will not be tolerated under any circumstances and may lead to further disciplinary action for those concerned.

### **1.8.12. Outcomes**

The outcomes of a formal or informal complaint procedure will depend on the nature of the complaint, its severity and what is deemed appropriate in the relevant circumstances.

Where the results of an investigation procedure suggest that an individual is guilty of bullying, appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in line with the Discipline Policy. The disciplinary action will depend on the nature and severity of the behavior and may include termination of employment, which may be instant dismissal where serious misconduct is deemed to have occurred.

Where the complaint involves a contractor or agent of Step123 and an investigation process reveals that a person has engaged in unlawful conduct or other behavior which is prohibited by this policy, those concerned may face termination of their contracts immediately, or will not be renewed in the future.

In addition to the remedies provided above, other action may be deemed necessary to resolve or remedy the behavior complained of, including but not limited to:

- Providing training to employees concerned regarding bullying;
- Requiring employees who have breached this policy to apologies to appropriate person(s);
- Adjusting working arrangements where appropriate;

- Providing counselling to employees (complainant and the person complained of);
- Placing employees on performance improvement plans to ensure improved behavior; and/or
- Providing coaching and mentoring.

## 1.8.13. Appeals Procedure

If any parties involved are unhappy with the outcome, or the way the complaint handling procedure was managed by Step123 please contact the Step123 Chief Executive Officer to discuss your concerns.

Once notified the Chief Executive Officer will conduct a review of the procedure followed, and the outcome issued, and make a final determination on the issue. Once this determination is made, the person who has made the appeal will be notified of the outcome and this determination will be final.

The following external bodies can also provide further information:

Jurisdiction	Contact Details
Victoria	Victorian Human Rights Commission 1300 292 153 <a href="http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au">http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au</a>
National	Australian Human Rights Commission 1800 620 241 <a href="https://www.humanrights.gov.au">https://www.humanrights.gov.au</a>
National Step123 Employees	Fair Work Ombudsman 13 13 94 <a href="http://www.fairwork.gov.au">http://www.fairwork.gov.au</a>

## Third Party Engagements

Step123 may engage a range of third parties from time to time in order to support the delivery of its services.

Step123 is responsible for all services delivered under its registration, regardless of where these are conducted, including in other countries. This responsibility applies to all RTO obligations, including:

- Providing data;
- Cooperating with ASQA;
- Complying with advertising and marketing standards;
- Informing prospective students;
- Dealing with complaints and appeals;
- Collecting fees; and
- Recordkeeping.

## Industry Engagement

Step123's training and assessment practices are developed and maintained as relevant to the needs of industry and informed by industry engagement.

To provide training relevant to employers and to maximize students' opportunities for employment, advancement or further education, Step123 engages with relevant industry stakeholders to establish appropriate contexts, methods, resources and *trainers and assessors* to deliver training and to conduct assessment.

Engaging with industry stakeholders (such as employers) is critical to ensuring Step123's training and assessment is aligned to current methods, technology, products and performance expectations for the workplace tasks specified in the training package or VET accredited course.



## Consumer Protection

### Australian Consumer Law

Step123 maintains compliance with the national *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* and associated *Australian Consumer Law (ACL)* requirements as specified in the Act and enacted in various state legislation across Australia. The ACL protects clients and ensures fair trading in Australia. Under the ACL clients have the same protections, and businesses have the same obligations and responsibilities, across Australia.

Step123 has implemented this *Consumer Protection Policy* and aligned *Consumer Protection Strategy* to protect the needs and interests of all clients. A designated *Consumer Protection Officer* has also been implemented:

Step123 Consumer Protection Officer

Nasir Naqvi

3 Lucknow Cres

Thomastown VIC 3074

03 8528 2682

[info@step123.edu.au](mailto:info@step123.edu.au)

Guarantee

As a course services provider, Step123 supplies services and guarantees that these services will be:

- Provided with due care and skill;
- Fit for the specified purpose; and
- Provided within a reasonable time.

Step123 ensures it uses an acceptable level of skill or technical knowledge and takes all necessary care to avoid loss or damage when providing course services.

### **Consumer Protection Strategy**

#### **1.8.14. Step123 Obligations**

Step123 ensures it:

- Provides the training and support necessary to allow students to achieve competency;
- Provides a quality training and assessment experience for all students;
- Provides a clear and accessible feedback and consumer protection system, including a designated and identified consumer protection officer;
- Maintains procedures for protecting consumers' personal information – please refer to the *Privacy* section of this manual for further information;
- Has established, documented and accessible consumer feedback and complaints handling policies and procedures; and
- Provides clients with details of these pathways for resolving or escalating complaints.

#### **1.8.15. Clients Rights and Obligations**

Step123 clients have the right to:

- Expect that the quality of your training meets the standards, regulations and requirement set down by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and relevant government subsidy body (where applicable);
- Be informed about the collection of personal information and be able to review and correct that information; and
- Access Step123's consumer protection complaints process.

Clients' obligations include:

- Providing accurate information to Step123; and
- Behaving in a responsible and ethical manner.

#### *Cessation of Delivery*

If Step123, or a third-party delivering training and assessment on Step123's behalf, closes or ceases to deliver any part of the training product that a student is enrolled in, a number of options will be available to the student including:

- Refund of course fees paid; and/or
- Continued delivery of services with alternate Step123 services delivery personnel (where applicable); and/or
- Supported transfer of the student enrolment to an alternate RTO for completion of services delivery (where applicable).

Clients' obligations include:

- Providing accurate information to Step123; and
- Behaving in a responsible and ethical manner.

#### **Publicly Available**

All Step123 consumer protection information and approaches is made available to all clients by being publicly published on the Step123 website and included within the relevant.

#### **Unsolicited Consumer Agreements**

Step123 or its contracted third-party representatives may, from time to time, engage in marketing promotions that result in *unsolicited consumer agreements*. Such promotions may include telephoning prospective students for course service offerings or approaching prospective students in public areas outside of Step123 premises.

Step123 representatives who make unsolicited contact with potential students in order to sell them course services comply with:

- Limited hours for contact;
- Disclosure requirements when making an agreement;
- Criteria for the agreement, including that it must be in writing; and
- Restrictions on supplying services above a certain value, and on requesting payment during the cooling-off period.

#### **Permitted Contact Hours**

Step123 representatives maintain compliance with the permitted hours for telemarketing, regulated under the *Do Not Call Register Act 2006* and associated telemarketing standards. Step123 representatives do not undertake telephone or fax marketing to clients:

- On a Sunday or a public holiday;
- Before 9am or after 8pm on a weekday; or
- Before 9am or after 5pm on a Saturday.

#### **Cooling Off Period**

Specifically, for unsolicited consumer agreements, clients have 3 business days to change their mind and cancel the Course Fees Agreement. During the cooling-off period Step123 does not provide any services or accept any payment.

For agreements negotiated by telephone, the cooling-off period begins on the first business day after the client receives the agreement document. For other agreements, the cooling-off period begins on the first business day after the agreement was made.

A client may terminate an agreement verbally or in writing. The termination date is when the client gives or sends the notice.

### **1.8.16. Course Fees Agreement**

Step123's *Course Fees Agreement* is transparent – expressed in plain language, legible and clear - and clearly states:

- The client's cooling-off and termination rights;
- The full terms of the agreement;
- The total fees payable, including fees for all additional items;
- The relevant Step123's
- Business address (not a post box number);
- Australian Business Number (ABN) or Australian Company Number (ACN); and
- Fax number and email address, where they have these.

### **Consumer Protection Complaints**

If an individual feels that Step123 or one of its third-party representatives has breached its obligations in the undertaking of marketing and sales activities, they may raise a complaint. We encourage individuals to discuss the situation with their Step123 representative in the first instance, before making a complaint. The complaints handling process is as follows:

- The individual should make the complaint including as much detail about the issue as possible, in writing to Step123:

Step123 Consumer Protection Officer

Nasir Naqvi

3 Lucknow Cres

Thomastown VIC 3074

03 8528 2682

info@step123.edu.au

- Step123 will investigate the circumstances included in the complaint and respond to the individual as soon as possible (and within 30 calendar days) regarding its findings and actions following this investigation.
- After considering this response, if the individual is still not satisfied they may escalate their complaint directly to the Consumer Protection Agency in the relevant jurisdiction for investigation:

Jurisdiction	Contact Details
Victoria	Consumer Affairs Victoria 1300 55 81 81 www.consumer.vic.gov.au

- Alternatively, a complaint may also be lodged with the ASQA complaints handling service for complaints against RTOs:

Australian Skills Quality Authority [www.asqa.gov.au](http://www.asqa.gov.au)

Phone: 1300 701 801

## **Marketing & Advertising**

Step123 enables informed choice for clients and students by providing clear and factual information, whether this is done directly or by a third party. Step123 is responsible for all marketing or other material disseminated on its behalf, regardless of the channel or method used.

Step123 is conscious of the national requirements for the marketing of nationally recognized training and ensures that the information used is accurate, clear and managed ethically. Step123 is subject to all relevant consumer protection law that applies in any jurisdiction where it operates and ensures it honors

all commitments it makes.

Step123's marketing or advertising material is consistent with its training and assessment strategies.

Step123 ensures its marketing of AQF qualifications to prospective students is ethical, factual and accurately represents the services it provides and the training products on its scope of registration.

## Pre-Enrolment Information

Step123 provides extensive current and accurate information about its course services via publishing publicly on its website. This public information includes the relevant handbook for each stakeholder group that contains information about:

- Step123 itself;
- Student rights & responsibilities;
- General regulatory and legislative compliance;
- Student attendance and behavior expectations;
- Equity commitment;
- Work health and safety requirements;
- Privacy arrangements;
- Fees, charges and refunds;
- Language, literacy and numeracy arrangements;
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit transfer;
- Competency-based training and assessment processes;
- Complaints and appeals processes;
- Records, release of information and access to student records;
- Cheating, plagiarism and discipline arrangements;
- Evaluation and feedback arrangements; and
- Further information contact details.

A range of compliance and operating information is also publicly published on the Step123 website. Please refer to the *Marketing & Advertising* section of this manual for further information.

## Course Services Information

Once a course information request, client expression of interest or course registration and application for enrolment has been received, Step123 provides further current and accurate information to prospective students to enable them to decide if Step123 as a training organization and the relevant course service of interest is suitable for them, taking into account their existing skills and knowledge and any specific individual needs.

Step123 ensures information provision for all course services is accurate and conforms to the planned training and assessment described in Step123's training and assessment strategies.

Prior to enrolment, Step123 provides clear information to prospective clients via the *Course Guide* including the following:

- Full course code and title of the training product(s) of interest;
- Any relevant currency information, such as whether a qualification has been superseded or removed from a training package;
- Where the training and/or assessment will be undertaken, how long it will take and mode/s involved;
- Information regarding any entry requirements and/or specific requirements they need to meet to successfully complete the course program of interest;
- Any requirements of the client to provide any materials and/or equipment;
- Information about educational and support services available to students and any cost associated with them;
- Any limitations regarding access to educational and support services and resources;
- Whether the training includes mandatory work placements. If mandatory work placements are part of the

training, clients are provided with clear information on who will arrange this, the duration and schedule applicable and what outcomes are expected of the work placement;

- Step123 is responsible for the quality of the training and assessment during all course services in compliance with the *VET Quality Framework* and the *Standards for RTOs 2015*; and
- Step123 is responsible for the issuance of AQF certification documentation the student is entitled to as course services are undertaken.

### **Fee Information**

Step123 provides fee information to clients prior to enrolment, via the *Course Fees Agreement*. Please refer to the *Fees, Charges and Refunds* section of this manual for further information.

### **Third Party Arrangements**

Where a third party is involved in the provision of training and/or assessment services, Step123 ensures clients have clear information regarding this engagement via the *Course Fees Agreement*.

Step123 provides the name and contact details of any third party involved in the provision of training and/or assessment services, or related educational and support services on its behalf to the client. Clients are able to contact both Step123 and the third party at any time.

### **Consumer Rights**

Step123 informs prospective clients about their rights as a consumer in accordance with relevant state and territory laws. This includes information on cooling-off periods where relevant. Please refer to the *Consumer Protection* section of this manual for further information.

Step123 informs prospective clients about its complaints and appeals processes that may be relevant for course services and other business activities. These processes include provisions for the Lodgement of a complaint or appeal against any relevant third party engaged by Step123, and are outlined in the Step123 relevant handbook for each stakeholder group.

Step123 notifies clients as soon as practical after any change occurs that may affect the course services being provided. This includes changes of significant impact including:

- Any changes to, or new third-party arrangements Step123 puts in place, for the delivery of services to specific clients; and
- A change in ownership of an RTO entity should that occur.

Notification occurs in writing, via letter, email or an amended *Course Fees Agreement* in cases where this is relevant.

## **Student Advice & Selection**

### **Student Entry Procedure**

On application for enrolment, Step123 ensures that all students are able to seek admission to a course program on the same basis. Where students have particular needs, these are discussed in open consultation with the student, and where appropriate, reasonable adjustments will be made in order to facilitate the student's enrolment.

Step123 provides high quality course services, including training and assessment that is suitable and appropriate for each student.

*Suitable* means the training and assessment meets the individual's needs, links to likely job and/or participation outcomes and minimizes duplication of the individual's existing competencies; and

*Appropriate* means the training and assessment is delivered to regulatory and industry standards, uses delivery modes and durations optimized for the individual's needs and includes reasonable support to

facilitate the individual's participation and attainment.

Step123 focuses on supporting a prospective student to understand how their options may affect their future and, ultimately, helping them to choose the right training. This includes being prepared to suggest, in some instances, that none of its offerings are right for an individual. Where this is the case, Step123 refers prospective students to relevant government websites in their jurisdiction as a good place to start to determine more suitable course options. Some example sites include:

Jurisdiction	Course Gateways
Victoria	Victorian Skills Gateway <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway</a>

### **1.8.17. Academically Suited**

Step123 has implemented this student entry procedure to ensure that students are confirmed to be academically suited to undertake the particular course they wish to study.

To ensure students are academically suited, Step123's student application and enrolment processes include the requirements that:

1. The student satisfies minimum academic admission requirements; and
2. The student satisfies any other specified entry requirements for the particular VET course of study; and
3. Step123 reasonably believes that the student is academically suited to undertake the VET course of study.

### **1.8.18. Pre-Enrolment Review**

Step123 conducts a *Pre-Enrolment Review* (referred to as *Pre-Training Review* for Victorian *Skills First* subsidized students) of current competencies including literacy and numeracy skills prior to commencement in training for each student.

The Pre-Enrolment Review is designed to:

- Identify any competencies previously acquired - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Credit Transfer;
- Ascertain a suitable, and the most suitable qualification for the student to enroll in, based on:
  - the individual's existing educational attainment, capabilities, aspirations and interests;
  - due consideration of the likely job outcomes, participation and/or further study opportunities from the development of new competencies and skills;
  - being vocationally relevant and reflecting industry requirements and the workplace setting;
  - minimizing duplication of the individual's existing competencies; and
  - meeting the individual's needs;
- Ascertain that the proposed learning strategies and materials are appropriate for that individual, based on:
  - providing reasonable and accessible support to facilitate the individual's participation in training and attainment of skills; and
  - the Volume of Learning, Amount of Training, duration, delivery modes, materials, facilities and equipment are sufficient:
    - to meet the individual's needs; and
    - for the individual to consolidate skills and produce job-ready competencies;
- Where the proposed learning includes portions delivered online, identify the individual's digital capability, including access to necessary technology, and where necessary identify steps to overcome any barriers in this regard.

Course Services are designed to build on a student's existing abilities and develop new ones. Students are not encouraged to undertake training where there is not a reasonable prospect of completion. The individual's existing educational and vocational attainment, other demonstrated capabilities, career aspirations and general interests are considered in course selections and services planning.



Step123 does not enroll a student in a course or qualification that is not suitable or inappropriate for that Student. The Pre-Enrolment Review is completed, and the outcomes known and documented, prior to acceptance of the student's enrolment application.

The Pre-Enrolment Review is a comprehensive assessment where Step123 genuinely seeks to understand a student's training needs. It's a conversation that encourages Students to reflect on their own aspirations and guides their selection of suitable training.

The Pre-Enrolment Review is undertaken by skilled Step123 personnel who provide impartial advice and translate a student's ideas about their future into tangible and suitable choices.

The Pre-Enrolment Review process encompasses:

- Student identification confirmation;
- Course information & requirements;
- Identifying Students' existing educational attainment, capabilities, aspirations and interests and individual needs;
- Language, Literacy & Numeracy assessment;
- Where the proposed learning includes portions delivered online, identify the individual's digital capability, including access to necessary technology;
- Previous competencies, Credit Transfer application (if relevant) and Recognition of Prior Learning application (if relevant);
- Employer engagement (if relevant);
- Government support eligibility (if relevant); and
  - Final planning, course confirmation and enrolment decision. Each of these components is outlined below.

#### **1.8.19. Student Identification Requirements**

A number of Step123 projects require identification to be confirmed and verified identification evidence to be retained on file on admission to any nationally recognized course program. This may include:

- Evidence of student identity (for example, photo identification);
- Evidence of student eligibility to participate (for example, citizenship); and
- Evidence of pre-requisites being met (for example, previous qualifications/study). Student identity is confirmed as an initial step in the Pre-Enrolment Review process.

#### **1.8.20. Course Information**

During the *Pre-Enrolment Review* process, general and course specific pre-enrolment information, including the relevant

*Course Guide* is explained in further detail and student queries answered. This generally includes:

- Explanation of course content, competency standards, timelines and stakeholders;
- Outline of entry requirements and admission requirements;
- Duration of course and the delivery mode of course;
- Identification of specific resource requirements for the course;
- Explanation of assessment procedures relevant to course;
- Step123's procedures and processes; and
- Fees, charges and refunds information.

#### **1.8.21. Identifying Individual Student's Needs**

Prior to enrolment Step123 provides advice to the prospective client about the training product(s) appropriate to meeting the student's needs, taking into account the individual's existing skills and competencies.

As a part of this process, Step123 ascertains and consider the individual's existing educational and

vocational attainment, other demonstrated capabilities, career aspirations and general interests.

To maximize the chance of students successfully completing their training, Step123:

- Identifies any support individual students need prior to their enrolment; and
- Provides access to that support throughout their training.

#### **1.8.22. Student Enrolment Information Collection**

All prospective students must complete and provide relevant enrolment information and personal data as a part of their enrolment application. This includes relevant AVETMISS data collection information and relevant student identifiers including the USI.

Prospective students have the option of commencing their enrolment information process online, by completing an online registration form for their initial course of interest. This online registration form once received is printed out and forms the basis of the student's enrolment information.

For prospective students that do not start the enrolment information process online, a hard-copy *Enrolment Application Form* will be completed by the prospective student as a part of the Pre-Enrolment Review.

In either case, once provided the enrolment information provided is used by Step123 representatives as a component of the Enrolment Review, as it provides significant information on the student's background, prior skills and qualifications, current employment status and particular special needs.

Either online print out or hard copy version of the *Enrolment Application Form* is signed by the student as a part of the Pre-Training Review process, to confirm that the information being provided is a true and accurate record relating to their individual situation. This confirms the application process, but does not constitute formal acceptance of the student's enrolment into the course.

#### **1.8.23. Students' Needs**

As a component of this process, Step123 determines the amount of training it will provide to each student with regard to:

- The existing skills, knowledge and the experience of the student;
- The academic suitability of the student;
- The mode of delivery; and
- Where a full qualification is not being delivered, the number of units and/or modules being delivered as a proportion of the full qualification.

Step123 provides a range of educational and support services to its students that include, but are not limited to:

- Pre-enrolment materials;
- Study support and study skills programs;
- Language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) programs or referrals to these programs;
- Equipment, resources and/or programs to increase access for students with disabilities and other students in accordance with access and equity;
- Learning resource centers;
- Mediation services or referrals to these services;
- Flexible scheduling and delivery of training and assessment;
- Counselling services or referrals to these services;
- Information and communications technology (ICT) support;
- Learning materials in alternative formats, for example, in large print;
- Learning and assessment programs contextualized to the workplace; and
  - Any other services that Step123 considers necessary to support students to achieve competency.

Support services are made available either directly or via arrangements with a third party.

Step123's individual needs process includes:

- Identifying particular requirements such as literacy, numeracy, English language or physical capabilities

- students would need to complete each course;
- student learning styles and identification of any special learning needs; and
- Developing strategies to make support available where gaps are identified.
- 

#### **1.8.24. Academic Suitability - Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (LLN) Assessment**

As a component of the Pre-Enrolment Review process, Step123 reviews all enrolment applications to ensure course admission requirements relating to the student's academic suitability are being met prior to acceptance of a student into a course.

Where a course has specific academic suitability admission requirements, as part of the Pre-Enrolment Review students are required to complete an *Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)* aligned *Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (LLN) Assessment* to ensure that the student has the ability to complete the course.

For all students in all course application processes, Step123 requires the assessment process to be conducted with honesty and integrity.

#### **1.8.25. Credit Transfer**

As a component of the *Pre-Training Review* process, Step123 ensures students are not required to repeat any unit or module in which they have already been assessed as competent, unless a regulatory requirement or license condition (including industry licensing schemes) requires this.

*Credit transfer* is a process that provides students with credit outcomes for components of a qualification based on identified equivalence in content and learning outcomes from previous studies.

Where a student provides suitable evidence they have successfully completed a unit or module at any RTO, Step123 provides credit for that unit or module. In some cases, licensing or regulatory requirements may prevent a unit or module being awarded through a credit process.

Step123 is not obliged however to issue a qualification or statement of attainment that is achieved wholly through recognition of units and/or modules completed at another RTO or RTOs.

Note that providing credit for previous studies is not a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. RPL is a form of assessment of the competence of a person, while providing credit is recognizing the equivalence of studies previously undertaken and completed successfully.

##### **Verification of Documentation**

Step123 recognizes verified testamurs from other Registered Training Organizations. This applies to all cases, including students seeking credit transfer for previous study, and personnel documentation.

Before providing credit on the basis of a qualification, statement of attainment or record of results, Step123 authenticates the information in the document. When verifying testamurs of nationally recognized qualifications or statements of attainment from other RTOs, Step123 personnel are required to:

1. Sight the *original* certificate/statement of attainment from which credit transfer is being sought;
2. Where there is doubt over the authenticity of the certificate/statement of attainment, the document must be confirmed with the relevant issuing registered training organization;
3. Ensure the unit codes on the previous certificate/statement of attainment are highlighted as the unit codes being sought for credit transfer;
4. Take a copy of the certificate/statement of attainment and certify this document by signing and dating that the certificate/statement of attainment has been verified, with the statement "I confirm that this document is a true and accurate copy of the original"; and
5. Where units are deemed equivalent, attach the relevant mapping page from the official training package / curriculum list where equivalency has been noted.

##### **Student Request for Credit Transfer**

If a student wishes to apply for Credit Transfer, it is *mandatory* that they complete the *Credit Transfer /*

*RPL Application Form* and include appropriate evidence to support the Credit Transfer application.

All Credit Transfer applications must be supported by the appropriate evidence. This may be in the form of Nationally Recognized Qualification or Statement of Attainment indicating exactly the same code and title as those included in the student application, or other documents of equivalence.

Where appropriate evidence is provided with the Credit Transfer application the *Training Manager* must grant the Credit Transfer. Where Credit Transfer is granted, the student will be advised within five working days of completion of the assessment and the training program adjusted accordingly.

Where Credit Transfer is not granted, the student will be notified in writing of the outcome within five working days of completion of the assessment. The written communication to the student includes a reason for refusal, and information on how to lodge a complaint or appeal if desired.

In all cases, a copy of the credit transfer application and verified copies of the relevant documentation evidence is retained in the student's file.

### **1.8.26. Recognition of Prior Learning**

*Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* means an assessment process that assesses the competency/s of an individual that may have been acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual meets the requirements specified in the training package or VET accredited courses.

- *Formal learning* refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction and is linked to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment (for example, a certificate, diploma or university degree);
- *Non-formal learning* refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction, but does not lead to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment (for example, in-house professional development programs conducted by a business); and
- *Informal learning* refers to learning that results through experience of work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities (for example the acquisition of interpersonal skills developed through several years as a sales representative).

RPL assesses this prior learning against the requirements of a qualification, in respect of both entry requirements and outcomes to be achieved. RPL encourages an individual to continue upgrading their skills and knowledge through structured education and training towards formal qualifications and improved employment outcomes. RPL keeps the system of qualifications open to recognition of the value of learning achieved outside the formal system, as part of everyday living in a continuum of learning throughout one's life.

In order to recognize prior learning, it is necessary to:

- Compare the informal or non-formal learning the individual has achieved against the learning outcomes or performance criteria of the course or qualification for which the student is using as a basis for seeking entry or the award of credit; and
- Determine appropriate evidence to support the claim of prior learning.

The processes used to assess RPL applications may take several (not mutually exclusive) forms, for example:

- Participation in exactly the same or modified versions of the assessment the student would be required to complete as part of the full course;
- Assessment based on a portfolio of evidence;
- Direct observation of demonstration of skill or competence;
- Reflective papers, journals or portfolios that relate past learning to the learning or competency outcomes of the current course or qualification;
- Provision of examples of the student's work drawn from the workplace, social, community or other setting in which the student applies their learning, skill or competence;

- Testimonials of learning, skill or competence; and
- Combinations of any of the above.

Step123 ensures that trainers and assessors remain current in their professional development and in their knowledge and understanding of issues related to recognition.

### **RPL Process**

As a component of the *Pre-Training Review* process, Step123 implements a robust RPL process to ensure that:

- The uptake of RPL is encouraged and RPL processes are reviewed to streamline the RPL application process;
- Where possible, the student is able to complete the qualification in less time;
- RPL information is provided to students prior to enrolment and prior to commencement of formal training delivery in a course program;
- RPL processes offered provide adequate information, support and opportunities for students to engage in the RPL process;
- RPL decisions are made prior to the commencement of the course, subject or unit for which the RPL is being claimed; and
- RPL assessment processes and procedures meet the same delivery and quality assurance requirements as all other assessment arrangements.

### **RPL Requirements**

To achieve RPL, students must:

- Apply for RPL;
- Provide appropriate RPL evidence (including documents, demonstrations and interviews as may be relevant); and
- Have this evidence assessed as meeting all of the requirements of the entire Unit of Competency.

Where students have gaps, or require additional mentoring and support, RPL is not applicable. In these cases, *learning*

is occurring, and a '*Competent*' result is achieved on completion of assessment.

### **RPL Applications**

It is *mandatory* that students wishing to achieve RPL with Step123 complete a *Credit Transfer / RPL Application Form* and provide this form with their evidence submission for assessment. This application form ensures:

- The Application for RPL is recorded effectively;
- The start date for each Unit of Competency is correctly identified; and
- The appropriate declarations of authenticity of prior work are recorded.

### **Financial / Regulatory Implications**

All Step123 personnel must ensure they are aware of RPL implications with regard to financial / regulatory impacts in their region and projects. RPL in some jurisdictions is:

- Fully subsidized;
- Partially subsidized; or
- Not subsidized.

Depending on the region, when students are applying for RPL, it is critical that Step123 personnel understand any financial implications that may apply and discuss correct fees and charges with the student concerned.

## **1.8.27. Employer Engagement**

As a component of the *Pre-Training Review* process, Step123 ensures that employers or other parties who contribute to each student's course services and outcome are informed and engaged in the training and assessment on the development, delivery and monitoring of training and assessment. This may include course services involving work placements, employer sponsored courses and apprenticeship or

traineeship arrangements.

- All employers involved in Step123 course services receive the *Employer Handbook* that provides a range of important information for employer involvement including:
  - Employer and RTO responsibilities;
  - student attendance and behavior expectations;
  - Equity commitment;
  - Work health and safety requirements;
  - Privacy arrangements;
  - Language, literacy and numeracy arrangements;
  - student support services;
  - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer;
  - Competency-based training and assessment process;
  - Complaints and appeals processes;
  - Evaluation and feedback arrangements;
  - Further information contact details; and
  - Any relevant required release from work or study.

Step123 ensures all students involved in workplace delivery have a range of processes and mechanisms implemented to engage the employer in the training and assessment process. This includes but is not limited to:

- Consultation prior to and during enrolment, and subsequent training and assessment sessions to gain input from the employer in areas such as the development of the training plan;
- Providing employer guidance on how to assist students to achieve competency through undertaking specific workplace tasks. This is undertaken through various contact and employer specific information and documents;
- Ensuring the assessment process is supported with supplementary evidence from the employer to contribute to the assessment outcome (such as *Third-Party Reports*);
- Regular contact with the employer to confirm the student's progress; and
- Formal evaluation processes to gain further feedback on the training and assessment processes provided.

#### **1.8.28. Finalizing the Pre-Enrolment Review**

As a Pre-Training Review is conducted, Step123 representatives complete the *Pre-Enrolment Review Checklist*

to confirm that all components of the process are completed effectively. The Pre-Enrolment Review process encompasses:

- Student identification confirmation;
- Course Information & requirements;
- Identifying students' individual needs;
- Course entry requirements & admission requirements;
- Academic Suitability including Language, Literacy & Numeracy assessment;
- Credit Transfer application (if relevant);
- Recognition of prior learning application (if relevant);
- Employer engagement (if relevant);
- Government subsidy support eligibility (if relevant); and
- Final planning, course confirmation and enrolment decision.

As all Pre-Enrolment Review activities above are completed, the Step123 representative clearly documents:

- The overall Pre-Enrolment Review discussion;
- The final decision on which course the student will be enrolled in; and
- Reasons why this was the most suitable training option for that student.

On conclusion of this process, a *Course Fees Agreement* including *Course Fees Agreement* is then prepared by Step123 in order to make a formal enrolment offer to the prospective student and/or relevant supporting client.



### **1.8.29. Non-Acceptance of Enrolment Application**

Should the prospective student not be accepted into the course program they have applied for, the individual will be provided with formal notice of this non-acceptance:

- In writing;
- With reasons provided for this non-acceptance;
- With any alternate options or actions recommended by Step123; and
- With relevant information on how the prospective student may raise a complaint or seek to have the decision reviewed.

## **Fees, Charges and Refunds**

Step123 undertakes to provide course services as outlined in client *Course Fees Agreement*.

### **Fees and Charges**

Prior to enrolment, Step123 notifies clients of a range of fee information in a *Course Fees Agreement*.

This fee information includes:

- All fees payable to Step123, clearly describing all costs involved with the course;
- How and when fees must be paid;
- How to request a refund;
- The conditions under which a refund would be provided; and
- The student's rights as a consumer, including but not limited to any statutory cooling-off period, if one applies.

This information forms part of the *Course Fees Agreement*. Information provided to clients is consistent with Step123 course services arrangements.

Where a student is being enrolled under any loan or delayed payment arrangement (including VET FEE-HELP), the terms of the arrangement are clearly stated, including:

- Any debt that may be incurred;
- When repayment is required;
- Under what conditions; and
- Any associated fees, indexation or interest.

### **Fee Arrangements**

Step123 fees are designed to minimize the impact of fees and charges, through flexible payment plans, dependent on service type. Step123 is committed to cost efficiency for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) applications, and will at all times seek to complete RPL applications at the same cost or lower than normal course delivery costs.

### **1.8.30. Course Services Fees**

All course services fees are published and available on the Step123 website. Published fees information includes fee rates for each training product, including full fee for service, subsidized, concession and exemption fee rates for each course and relevant government jurisdiction.

### **1.8.31. Student Support Services Fees**

If any specific student support options available attract an additional cost to the client, Step123 makes this clear in pre-enrolment information and as a part of the *Course Fees Agreement*. Similarly, if there are limitations to the support Step123 is able to provide to particular client cohorts, these limitations are also made clear in information provided to potential students.

Clear and accurate information on these items is included in the Step123's relevant handbook for each stakeholder group.

### **1.8.32. Incidental Expenses**

There may be some instances of a personal cost to a student over and above the general course fees. These costs include:

- *Essential equipment* and other items that the student has the choice of acquiring from Step123, or from a supplier other than Step123, that become the physical property of the student, are retained by the student on completion of training, and are not consumed during the training.  
*Example: tool kit.*
- An *optional charge for an item* that is not essential for the student to complete the training.
- An *optional charge for an alternative form of access* to an item or service that is an essential component of the training, but is otherwise made readily available at no additional fee by Step123.
- *Field trips and food, transport and accommodation costs* associated with the provision of field trips that form part of the training.
- Any *textbook* the student requires for their course that is retained by the student after completion of the qualification.

For each qualification, Step123 publishes on its website any additional costs that a student will or may incur and ensure that students are aware of these costs prior to enrolment.

Step123 provides the student or employer (where relevant) with receipts for any monies collected by Step123 for incidental expenses. Step123 retains copies of receipts issued.

### **1.8.33. Repeated Assessment**

Students are able to attempt any Theory assessment attached to their complete a unit of competency on two (2) occasions within their initial student course fee. Step123 does not levy additional fees for these attempts.

### **Government Loan, Funding, Subsidy and Support Entitlements**

In cases where students are accessing any government funding entitlement that may reduce their ability to access such funding in the future (such as arrangements that limit funding to one qualification for a person), Step123 also provides advice on these arrangements prior to enrolment, via the *Course Fees Agreement*.

The total course fee for a government subsidized course is divided into two components:

- The Fee (to the student / employer / client); and
- The Subsidy (paid by the relevant government body).

In cases of government funding or subsidy, the *Course Fees Agreement* also includes the approximate value of the contribution from government towards the qualification(s) in which the student is considering enrolment.

### **Third Party Fee Arrangements**

Step123 third party representatives do not collect fees on behalf of Step123.

### **Notifications and Guarantee**

Step123 notifies clients as soon as practical after any change occurs that may affect the course services being provided. This includes changes of significant impact including:

- Any changes to, or new third-party arrangements Step123 puts in place, for the delivery of services to those specific clients; and
- A change in ownership of an RTO entity should that occur.

Step123 guarantees that no additional charges will be imposed during the period covered by the *Course Fees Agreement*.

## **Recovery of Outstanding Student Fees**

Step123 collects all fees to be paid by the student by the time they complete their subsidized training. Step123 retains student fees that it collects.

Step123 has a robust process for the recovery of outstanding fees from a student. The failure by a student to pay a fee owing is considered to be a breach of discipline and can lead to penalties being imposed on the student under *Discipline* arrangements.

One of the penalties that may be considered is the delay in release of results or testamur(s) as relevant to the student until all fees are recovered. For significant student debts, formal debt collection actions may also be undertaken.

## **Fee Concessions and Exemptions**

Fee concessions and exemptions do not apply to Step123's courses.

## **Fee Protection**

Step123 does not collect more than \$1,500 in prepaid fees (fees in advance) from students for all course services. The requirements that apply to prepaid fees include all fees that a student is required to pay, including enrolment fees, tuition fees, materials fees and any other fee component that is a mandatory payment for the course.

Step123 is only required to protect prepaid fees from individual students and prospective students. These requirements do not apply for other clients - for example, where an employer engages Step123 to provide training and/or assessment to its personnel.

## **Refunds**

From time to time a refund may be required for specific student cases. Refund information and arrangements are made available to clients prior to enrolment through:

- Step123's Student Handbook;
- Step123 website; and
- As a part of the *Course Fees Agreement* completed with the client prior to enrolment.

Refunds may be paid automatically, or sought and negotiated on an individual basis with Step123, on a case-by-case basis.

Step123 has publicly published on its website, and makes students aware of this *Refund* policy before enrolment.

### **Refund policy**

CIRCUMSTANCES	REFUND APPLICABLE
Withdrawal or cancellation more than seven days prior to the course commencement date	Refund of course fees, less: -\$40.00 administration and processing fees -any credit card processing fees that were incurred by Step123 at 4%
Withdrawal or cancellation less than seven days prior to the course commencement date	Refund of 50% of the course fees paid, with the exception of heavy vehicle bookings, where the fee will be a flat \$400.00
Withdrawal or cancellation less than 24 hours prior to the course commencement date	No refund

No Withdrawal or cancellation prior to the course, or requested after the course has commenced	No refund
Scheduled course is cancelled by Step123	Course fees are to be refunded in full if Step123 is unable to commence the course service as agreed due to a lack of minimum student numbers or unforeseen circumstances.

#### **Rebooking Policy**

<b>CIRCUMSTANCES</b>	<b>REBOOKING APPLICABLE</b>
Withdrawal or cancellation more than seven days prior to the course commencement date	Student is entitled to one free re-booking
Withdrawal or cancellation less than seven days prior to the course commencement date	Re-booking fee of 20% of course fees paid
Withdrawal or cancellation less than 24 hours prior to the course commencement date	No re-booking, all monies forfeited
No Withdrawal or cancellation prior to the course, or requested after the course has commenced	No re-booking, all monies forfeited
Scheduled course is cancelled by Step123	Free Rebooking

#### **1.8.34. Refunds Due to Non-Provision of Services**

Course fees are to be refunded in full if Step123 is unable to commence the course service as agreed due to a lack of minimum student numbers or unforeseen circumstances.

Where Step123 or a third-party representative is unable to complete the course services due to unforeseen circumstances or closure, any course services fees are refunded on a pro-rata basis, with comparison of the course fees paid against the units of competency where services have been delivered.

Where there is an instance of Step123 default due to unforeseen circumstances, Step123 will endeavor to arrange for another course, or part of a course, to be provided to students at no (extra) cost to the student as an alternative to a refund. Where the student agrees to this arrangement, Step123 will not refund fees paid.

#### **Refunds Due to Client Request / Hardship Application**

Students may have extenuating circumstances that prevent them from attending scheduled course dates that may include but are not limited to illness, family or personal matters, or other reasons that are out of the ordinary. Where evidence can be successfully provided to support the student's circumstances, course service fees may either be transferred to the next available course where applicable, or a refund of unused course fees will be issued.

This decision of assessing the extenuating circumstances rests with the Chief Executive Officer and shall be assessed on a case-by-case situation.

Where delivery has commenced, course fees have been paid and a client believes a special circumstance

refund is warranted, the client may apply for a refund in writing to:

Step123 Chief Executive Officer

Nasir Naqvi

3 Lucknow Cres

Thomastown VIC 3074

03 8528 2682

info@step123.edu.au

All refund applications are assessed and processed within fourteen (14) days of the application being placed. The client will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application, including reasons for refusing a refund in cases where this occurs.

All clients have the right to appeal a refund decision made by Step123. Please refer to the *Complaints* section for further information.

### **Course Fees Agreement**

All prospective students, prior to enrolment, receive a *Course Services Agreement* including *Statement of Fees* from Step123. This agreement makes a formal enrolment offer to the prospective student and/or relevant supporting client, and includes all relevant fees, charges, refunds and government support information relevant to the student's course selection, Enrolment and Induction.

Step123 course services meet strict student services standards, to maintain an exceptional standard of student service, and meet compliance with the conditions and standards of the *VET Quality Framework, Standards for RTOs 2015* and various other guidelines and contractual requirements.

### **Fee Records**

All course services fees, relevant invoices and receipts for each student course enrolment are recorded and maintained in the Step123 Student Management System. This system acts as the official accounts receivables system for Step123 and is maintained as the official and auditable records for all fees, charges and refunds.

### **Enrolment**

Step123 assesses all potential student enrolment applications to ensure they meet the enrolment requirements of the course and to confirm their ability to complete the requested training product.

Where the enrolment of the student would require unreasonable adjustments to the course program, the student's admission for enrolment will not be processed. Decisions on the acceptance or otherwise of student enrolment applications are free from bias and discrimination.

#### **1.8.35. Confirmation of Enrolment**

A student's enrolment application into a course program is accepted and enrolment confirmed once:

- All pre-enrolment information has been provided and discussed;
- Student identity has been confirmed;
- Student individual needs assessment has been completed;
- Enrolment information collection has been completed and confirmed;
- Course entry requirements and admission requirements have been reviewed and confirmed;
- Any government subsidy or support eligibility process has been undertaken and concluded;
- Any final Pre-Training Review processes are conducted; and
- A *Course Fees Agreement* has been received by all parties.

The date on which the *Course Fees Agreement* is received by all parties is confirmed as being the official date of enrolment.

### **Induction**

Step123 induction sessions with students may be individual or in groups, and include:

- Further explanation of course content, competency standards, timelines and stakeholders;
- Preparation and signing of the Training Plan; and
- Provision of initial course resources, information or activities.

Step123 personnel conducting the induction process are responsible to ensure all paperwork is completed.

### **Training Plans**

Step123 documents course services information on training and assessment in a *Training Plan* for all students. Training plans include:

- Name and contact details for Step123 (and employer, for apprentices/trainees);
- Title and code of qualification;
- Unit title and code of competencies/modules to be obtained;
- Scheduled hours for competencies to be obtained;
- Timeframe for achieving competencies including the start date and end date of each competency (and actual dates for where training has already occurred, for Apprentices/Trainees);
- Delivery modes to be used;
- Proposed learning strategies and resources that are appropriate for the student;
- Details of the support services that the student will receive, including if they:
  - Are Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
  - Have a disability; or
  - Are long-term unemployed;
- Details of any customization included to respond to the needs of the student and/or work locations and/or employer;
- Assessment details and arrangements;
- Party or parties responsible for the delivery and/or assessment of each competence;
- Record of Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer hours granted, as relevant; and
- Signature (including date of signature) of the Step123 representative and the student.

#### **1.8.36. Amendments to the Training Plan**

Step123 routinely negotiates amendments to the Training and Assessment Plan approach with all students. Where a major amendment occurs (e.g., delivery mode / change of unit selection):

An amended training plan is prepared in negotiation with the student(s); and

All parties sign off a new declaration on the amended training plan to confirm agreement.

Step123 updates the *Training Plan* according to any changes mutually agreed throughout the course services. Step123 monitors each student's progress in satisfying the requirements of the qualification, in line with the *Training Plan*.

### **Training Services**

Competency Based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) is a flexible form of training that aims to produce a workforce with the knowledge and skills which industry requires. Under CBT, we have competency standards. The concept of competency focuses on what is expected of an employee in the workplace rather than on the learning process, and embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

Competency is a broad concept that includes all aspects of work performance and not only narrow task skills. The *dimensions of competency* encompass:



- The requirement to perform individual tasks (task skills);
- The requirement to manage a number of different tasks within the job (task management skills);
- The requirement to respond to irregularities and breakdowns in routine (contingency management skills);
- The requirement to deal with responsibilities and expectations of the work environment (job role environment skills), including working with others.

Each Unit of Competency describes the work performed in the workplace. Students undertaking training and assessment receive a competent result when successful workplace performance is demonstrated.

## **Volume of Learning**

Step123 is required to develop and implement approaches, including providing access to suitable resources, facilities and trainers, to ensure students gain all relevant skills and knowledge.

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) provides a guide to the volume of learning which describes how long a student who does not hold any of the competencies identified in the relevant units of competency or modules would take to develop all the required skills and knowledge.

The volume of learning includes all teaching and learning activities such as guided learning (classes, lectures, tutorials, online or self-paced study), individual study, research, learning activities in the workplace and assessment activities. The amount of training provided by Step123 is part of the overall volume of learning and relates primarily to formal activities including classes and other activities as well as workplace learning.

Volume of Learning							
Certificate I	Certificate II	Certificate III*	Certificate IV**	Diploma	Advanced Diploma	Graduate Certificate	Graduate Diploma
0.5 – 1 year	0.5 – 1 year	1 – 2 years	0.5 – 2 years	1 – 2 years	1.5 – 2 years	0.5 – 1 year	1 – 2 years
600 – 1200 hours	600 – 1200 hours	1200 – 2400 hours	600 – 2400 hours	1200 – 2400 hours	1800 – 2400 hours	600 – 1200 hours	1200 – 2400 hours

\* Certificate III qualifications are often the basis for trade outcomes and are undertaken as part of a traineeship or apprenticeship. In these cases, up to four years may be required to achieve the learning outcomes.

\*\* Certificate IV qualifications are often either:

- Shorter duration specialist qualifications that build on existing skills and knowledge; or

- Longer duration qualifications that are designed as entry level requirements for specific work roles. Step123 complies with the AQF in applying the volume of learning to its programs. In a competency-based training environment, students aren't required to study for a specified number of weeks or months; however, Step123 must still be able to identify and explain any significant variations from the time periods described in the AQF.

Step123 has developed and implemented strategies for training and assessment that are consistent with the AQF. If a course is structured so as to be completed in a shorter time period than that described in the AQF, Step123 clearly describes, using a rationale based on the previous skills and knowledge and the needs of students, how a specific student cohort:

- Has the characteristics to achieve the required rigor and depth of training; and
- Can meet all of the competency requirements in a shorter timeframe.

Descriptions take into account the need to allow students to reflect on and absorb the knowledge, to practice the skills in different contexts and to learn to apply the skills and knowledge in the varied environments that the 'real world' offers before being assessed.

A shorter course may be acceptable if, for example, the student cohort comprises experienced workers who already have most of the required skills and knowledge. Because these students have previous relevant experience, it may be appropriate to deliver the program over a shorter period. Assessment requirements must still be met in such programs, although some assessment may be undertaken by recognizing existing skills and knowledge.

Where the student cohort consists of new entrants or inexperienced workers, before assessment Step123 ensures students have been provided with the opportunity to fully absorb the required knowledge, and to develop skills over time in the different contexts they would experience in the workplace. This may require a longer timeframe than for those students with significant industry experience.

## Training & Assessment Strategies

Step123 develops a strategy (or strategies as relevant) for each training product it is registered to deliver. Different strategies may be developed for different delivery models or target groups.

### **1.8.37. Guarantee**

Step123 has, for all of its scope of registration, and consistent with its training and assessment strategies, sufficient:

- Trainers and assessors to deliver the training and assessment;
- Provision of or referral to educational and support services to meet the needs of the student cohort/s undertaking the training and assessment;
- Learning resources to enable students to meet the requirements for each Unit of Competency, and which are accessible to the student regardless of location or mode of delivery; and
- Facilities, whether physical or virtual, and equipment to accommodate and support the number of students undertaking the training and assessment.

Step123 meets all requirements specified in the relevant training package or VET accredited course for each training product delivered. Step123's Training and Assessment strategies and practices, including the amount of training provided, are consistent with the requirements of training packages and VET accredited courses relevant to the training products being delivered, and enable each student to meet the requirements for each Unit of Competency or module in which they are enrolled.

Step123 determines the amount of training provided when documenting and implementing training and assessment strategies with regard to:

- The existing skills, knowledge and the experience of the student target group;
- The mode of delivery; and
- Where a full qualification is not being delivered, the number of units and/or modules being delivered as a

proportion of the full qualification.

## **Training & Assessment Strategy Requirements**

Each Step123s Training and Assessment Strategy addresses, at a minimum, the following areas:

- Training product - The training product the strategy relates to is clearly identified. The code, full title and release number is included, as well as the currency information in cases where the training product is superseded and in transition mode.
- Core and elective components (full qualifications) – where delivering a full qualification, core and elective components are identified in accordance with the structure defined in the training package or course. Elective units or modules being offered are defined to ensure that proper planning has been completed for all delivery variables. Pre-requisite and co-requisite units are identified, as is any relevant sequencing of delivery and assessment.
- Mode of delivery – How the training and assessment is to be delivered is identified - face-to-face, online, through workplace training or a mixture of different modes.
- Entry requirements - any mandatory requirements for students to commence the program are identified, such as qualifications that must be held or periods of industry experience. Any areas where the student target group may need additional support are also identified (for example, if the target group has low English levels) and also whether students' physical attributes may influence their ability to complete the training and assessment is noted (for example, if heavy lifting is required).
- Duration and scheduling - The nature of the target group is analyzed and, in conjunction with the specific requirements of the training product, how Step123 will schedule training and assessment activities is determined to ensure students are able to fully develop the required skills and knowledge prior to being assessed. It may be necessary to indicate variations for some cohorts due to their specific learning needs.
- Assessment resources, methods and timing - Training packages and VET accredited courses often specify resources that must be used in assessment at a Unit of Competency level. Details are included of how Step123 ensures students have access to the resources that will give them the best chance of completing their study. This includes:
  - Assessment resources;
  - Assessment methods to be used;
  - Timing of assessment; and
  - Any adjustments that may be needed to cater for different student characteristics.
- Learning resources - To ensure students are able to obtain and absorb the required knowledge and skills prior to assessment, Step123 carefully chooses and plans the learning resources to be used to guide students. Step123 ensures it has full coverage of all required areas.
- Human resources - The human resources available to deliver the training product are documented. Step123 ensures suitable trainers and assessors are available for all training products on its scope of registration. This is recorded at a Unit of Competency level to ensure any specific requirements are met, and to allow Step123 to deploy personnel efficiently.
- Physical resources – A comparison of the physical resources required to deliver a training product with the resources available to Step123 is also completed. With many units of competency including detailed specifications of resources required, conducting this analysis at a Unit of Competency level ensures these requirements are addressed.
- Guidance on the level of resources needed per student or per group is included where relevant in each resources section above.

### **1.8.38. Strategies for 'Stand-alone' Single Units**

Step123 develops and implements a strategy in the same way as a qualification, noting that some information may not be relevant, such as information on core and elective units.

Often, this type of delivery is aimed at an industry license or accreditation. All of the requirements of that license or accreditation in the strategy (including any possible entry requirements such as minimum age) are included with explanation of how students can readily attain the desired outcome.

### **1.8.39. Strategies for 'Assessment Only' Pathways**

Where Step123 offers an 'assessment only' pathway, it also develops and implements a strategy that covers the

above items with specific focus on:

- Assessment methods, timing and resources;
- How issues are addressed (for example, if a student does not achieve the competency requirements); and
- Any specific requirements such as a minimum period of industry experience before commencing the program.

#### **1.8.40. Contextualization**

Step123 may contextualize units of competency to reflect local skill needs. Contextualization could involve additions or amendments to the unit of competency to suit particular delivery methods, learner profiles, or specific enterprise requirements. Any contextualization must ensure the integrity of the outcome of the unit of competency is maintained.

Industry requirements, as described in training or job specifications, may be used to contextualize a unit of competency.

#### **Development of Resource Materials**

Step123 maintains resources available at all times for delivery of every training product on its scope of registration whether the training product is currently being delivered or not. All resources comply with specific requirements in the relevant training package or accredited course.

Training and assessment materials are, where possible, developed by Step123 personnel and tailored to the needs of each individual student and group. A structured development process is used for all Step123 resource materials development. Through the use of *Competency Mapping* validations, Step123 has confirmed that at all times these resources are aligned to, and meet requirements of, national competency standards.

#### **1.8.41. Commercially Produced Resources**

Where Step123 uses nationally produced (or commercially purchased) support materials, it ensures that these resources have been thoroughly vetted for use with the student target group and have been *competency mapped* in order to ensure that the resources meet all competency requirements.

#### **1.8.42. Individual Personnel Resources**

Individual personnel resources do not form part of the formal training and assessment resources provided by Step123.

#### **Training Delivery**

Step123 is committed to quality student centered course services provision that meets each individual student's needs. Step123 personnel strive to ensure that their teaching meets this commitment and:

- Provides a learning environment which recognizes differences in students' ages, experiences, aptitudes, learning styles and background; and
- Incorporates flexible delivery methods based on students' needs.

#### **Use of Technology**

As a courtesy to staff and other students, students may be asked to turn off their mobile phones and iPods (or similar devices) during all training and practical sessions. Individual arrangements should be made with trainers regarding use of these devices, especially if needed for access for family emergencies or equivalent.

#### **Services Delivery**

Step123:

- Provides students with initial course materials and documentation within ten (10) days of finalizing and signing their training plan;
- Delivers the training and assessment services in accordance with the training plan through the appropriate mode as identified in that plan;
- Where relevant, assists employer representatives to access appropriate materials to record achievements of the student in the workplace;
- Monitors the progress of the student throughout the program;
- Reviews progress of the student at regular intervals - typically on a monthly basis;
- Provides additional support as planned or required; and
- Conducts training and assessment services in a safe and accessible environment.

If at any stage prior to commencing delivery of the structured training and assessment, Step123 is unable to deliver the structured training and assessment identified in the training plan, it:

- Assists the student to identify an alternative RTO;
- Manages the transfer of that student to the new RTO with all appropriate records;
- In accordance with the Fees, Charges and Refunds policy, refund relevant fees paid by the student; and
- In the case of students under a training contract, notify the relevant STA that it will no longer be providing training relating to that particular qualification outcome and provide information confirming that the student has been transferred to another RTO.

### **Flexible Delivery Methods**

Step123 provides structured framework and learning pathways for students involved in flexible delivery methods.

A turnaround policy of '*within one working day*' is in place for all client queries, whether in verbal or written format. All Step123 personnel strive to meet this client expectation.

An assessment turnaround policy of '*within fourteen (14) days*' is also in place for the assessment and return of assignments, recognition portfolios and other student documentation, to ensure that students receive accurate and timely information and feedback as they complete their course.

### **Attendance**

Step123 ensures consistency in monitoring and recording of student attendance meeting contractual requirements to maintain accurate records for reporting against training and assessment engagement.

Step123 trainers and assessors must ensure that complete and accurate records of attendance by students are maintained relevant to all engagement in accredited training, delivery and assessment. It is each trainer and assessor's responsibility to record attendance requirements.

Attendance recording applies to:

- Workshop attendance;
- Workplace training logged time;
- Assessment meetings; and
- Observation activities.

Attendance evidence, as official documentation, is recorded on:

- Step123 *Attendance Record*; or
- *Contact Record*.

#### **1.8.43. Recording Attendance**

Attendance is recorded at every Step123 assessment training or event, whether that be a group workshop, individual session or workplace onsite visit. The attendance record is completed at the beginning of each training session.

#### **1.8.44. Non-attendance**

Where a student misses a session without notice, the trainer makes contact with the student (and/or their

immediate supervisor for workplace supported students) to verify the reason for their absence and to negotiate their return.

Reasons for non-attendance are to be recorded on the *Attendance Record* for all non-attended students before the record is provided to Step123 Data and Administration team for processing.

In cases of repeated non-attendance, the trainer provides relevant advice to the student that their ability to complete the training program may be compromised by their non-attendance. Non-attendance contact and advice is noted on a *Contact Record*.

If non-attendance continues for more than two consecutive sessions, the trainer:

- Discusses the non-attendance with the student (and their employer where relevant);
- Provides options and determines a resolution to the non-attendance.

Where a student identifies that they will not be continuing with the program it is the trainer's responsibility to look at

options to try and re-engage the student. Failing this, the trainer must collect the student's withdrawal in writing.

### **Workplace Delivery**

In the case of workplace delivery, many of the required resources for course services may be readily available. Step123 confirms all resources required for delivery are available using the Workplace Resources Checklist.

Where workplaces do not have access to all required resources Step123 addresses resource gaps through a variety of options including:

- Provision of additional resources;
- Placement of the student in a simulated or alternate workplace environment; or
- Provision of alternate elective unit options that better reflect the workplace environment.

#### **1.8.45. Simulated Workplace Environments**

When using 'simulated' workplace environments, Step123 ensures they fully replicate the resources, environment and any time and productivity pressures that exist in the actual workplace. The selection and structure of simulated workplace environments is informed by consultation with industry stakeholders to ensure relevance to real workplaces.

### **Providing Student Support**

Step123 embraces the responsibility of ensuring all students are supported in acquiring the knowledge and skills sought through their training and assessment program. Step123 determines the support needs of individual students prior to enrolment and ensures access is provided to the educational and support services necessary for the individual student to meet the requirements of the training product as specified in training packages or VET accredited courses.

All Step123 personnel are aware of available internal or external resources, or are able to confidently refer students to appropriate tutoring and community support services. For further information, please refer to the *Meeting Individual Student Needs* section of this manual.

#### **1.8.46. Relevant National Criminal Checks or Working with Children Checks**

If students are entering an industry requiring a character check (for example, aged care or children's services):

- students are made aware of the requirement prior to enrolment, including the process and costs to secure the relevant check;
- Checks should be processed by students as soon as practicable after course enrolment, so that they have received their police check in time for their work placement (the processing time can be up to six weeks); and



- Students may select an industry area without this requirement for their placement, or opt out of placement altogether, instead of undergoing the required check, but only in cases where the work placement is not a mandatory component of the course services.

### **Students Transferring, Deferring or Withdrawing**

#### **1.8.47. Withdrawals**

If a current student is thinking of withdrawing from study, the student should contact the Step123 Student Support Centre for specific support and advice on their individual situation

If a student wishes to withdraw from a unit/subject or a course, they can do so at any time.

#### **WITHDRAWAL FROM OR CANCELLATION OF A COURSE MUST BE EMAILED TO**

[info@step123.edu.au](mailto:info@step123.edu.au)

stating:

1. Name of Student:
2. Name of Course:
3. Date of Course:
4. Reason for Cancellation/Withdrawal:

Refunds will be processed in line with the receipt date of the cancellation/withdrawal email.

Notification of withdrawal can occur in any written form, including but not limited to email, fax, letter or form.

Key contact details for withdrawal include:

Student Support Centre [info@step123.edu.au](mailto:info@step123.edu.au)

03 8773 9000

Step123 ensures there are no financial, administrative or other barriers that would result in a student not being able to withdraw from a course.

#### **1.8.48. Student Transfer Out Process**

If a student elects to transfer from Step123 to another registered training organization, Step123 provides advice to the student as soon as practically possible.

Where the enrolled student elects to transfer out, Step123:

- Provides options for continuing training, which may include:
  - Refers the student to relevant government authorities to identify an alternative RTO who can provide Subsidized Training;
  - The enrolled student opting to remain and continue training on an alternate basis or arrangement; or
  - Suggesting an alternative Provider.
- Issues Statements of Attainment/Qualification credentials reflective of their actual training and assessment progress to date;
- Issues an updated Training Plan listing all units of competency where an outcome has been achieved, commenced but not completed and/or not commenced;
- Ensures any refunds owed are paid;
- Return results of any outstanding completed training activities and/or assessments to the student;
- Submits any government reporting required; and
- If the student is an Apprentice or Trainee, follows the process required for the change of RTO named on the Training Contract.

Step123 keeps records of all requests for/notices of discontinuation or keep a file note or log of such requests/notices together with evidence of all discontinuations made including evidence that it fulfilled its obligations above.

#### **1.8.49. Student Transfer in Process**

A student transferring in to Step123 is treated as a new student and Step123 carries out all standard enrolment processes.

### **1.8.50. Students Deferring Training**

If a student indicates that they wish to defer their studies, Step123 makes every effort to assist students to continue training where possible.

If a student proceeds with the deferral of their studies, Step123 only permit a deferral of no more than twelve (12) months from the date of receipt of notice from the student.

Step123 advises students of the fee implications of deferring their studies in accordance with the individual's relevant fee arrangements.

Students who do not recommence studies within a twelve (12) month period of deferral are considered to have discontinued their studies with all records and reports processed as per the discontinuance process below.

Step123 keeps records of all requests for/notices of deferral or keep a file note or log of such requests/notices together with evidence of all deferrals made.

### **1.8.51. Discontinuing students**

If a student indicates they wish to discontinue their studies without completing their course, Step123 ascertains if the reason for discontinuing relates to the performance of Step123.

If that is the case, Step123 ensure that reasonable efforts are made to address concerns of the student related to the delivery and assessment of training.

If a student proceeds to discontinue their studies, Step123

- Attempts to obtain formal notification from the student of the date their studies will end;
- Provides any refund of any applicable fee;
- Gives the exiting student a Course Fees Agreement that includes all fees applied and any fees refunded, if applicable;
- Issues the student with a Statement of Attainment and associated transcript for completed units of competency;
- Updates the *Training Plan* listing all units of competency where an outcome has been achieved, commenced but not completed and/or not commenced;
- Provides the updated *Training Plan* to the student;
- Returns results of any outstanding completed training activities and/or assessments to the student;
- For Apprentices or Trainees, notifies the relevant AASN and government authorities within 14 days of notification of the discontinuation of training;
- Has given clear advice to the employer that final confirmation completes the Training Contract; and
- Finalizes any other government reporting requirements.

Step123 keeps records of all requests for/notices of discontinuation or keep a file note or log of such requests/notices together with evidence of all discontinuations made.

## **Assessment Services**

Step123 has implemented an assessment system that ensures that assessment (including recognition of prior learning):

- Complies with the assessment requirements of the relevant training package or VET accredited course; and
- Is conducted in accordance with the Principles of Assessment and the Rules of Evidence.

*Assessment* means the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved, to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard required in the workplace, as specified in a training package or VET accredited course.

*Assessment system* is a coordinated set of documented policies and procedures (including assessment materials and tools) that ensure assessments are consistent and are based on the Principles of Assessment and the Rules of Evidence.

*Assessors* are persons who assess a student's competence.

Step123 has developed and implemented a rigorous assessment system to ensure:

- Assessment judgements are consistently made on a sound basis; and
- Validation of assessment judgements is carried out.

The assessment system includes not only the actual materials used directly in conducting assessment, but also policies, procedures and other supporting documents that inform the way assessment is conducted within Step123.

For a student to be assessed as competent, Step123 ensures the student demonstrates there:

- Ability to perform relevant tasks in a variety of workplace situations, or accurately simulated workplace situations;
- Understanding of what they are doing, and why, when performing tasks; and
- Ability to integrate performance with understanding, to show they are able to adapt to different contexts and environments.

All students:

- Are assessed against all of the tasks identified in the elements of the unit or module;
- Demonstrate they are capable of performing these tasks to an acceptable level;
- Must demonstrate they hold all of the required skills and knowledge, as specified in the unit or module assessment requirements.

## **General Assessment Requirements**

Step123 assessment approaches are always based on the performance of the individual student. If assessment tasks are undertaken as a group, each student is still assessed on each component of the assessment task.

*Recognition of prior learning* is simply a form of assessment of a student's competence. As such, recognition of prior learning must be conducted with the same rigor as any other form of assessment. Where assessment is completed via recognition of prior learning, the requirements do not change, although the variety of evidence gathered and considered in making an assessment decision may be greater than through 'traditional' assessment activities.

Similarly, distance and online delivery methods may change the type of evidence considered, although the same requirements apply. Regardless of the mode of delivery or engagement, all assessment meets the same requirements.

## **Assessment Requirements**

Each Unit of Competency contains assessment requirements grouped into three areas:

- Performance evidence;
- Knowledge evidence; and
- Assessment conditions.

Performance and knowledge evidence describe what a student must demonstrate in order to be considered competent. Assessment conditions describe the conditions under which a student must demonstrate this, including any specific requirements for resources, trainers and assessors and the context for assessment.

Note that some training packages and courses may not have been updated to this format. In these cases, 'required skills and knowledge' and 'evidence guide' or similar terms are used.

### **Use of Technology**

Mobile phones and iPods (or similar devices) are not to be used during assessments at Step123. Individual arrangements should be made with trainers regarding use of these devices, especially if needed for access for family emergencies or equivalent during Assessments.

### **Assessment Planning**

When planning assessment, Step123 addresses all of the requirements of the unit or module. This does not mean separate assessment activities for each item, but that, as a whole, Step123 assessment activities cover every area required. To achieve a 'competent' result, students must meet all the requirements of the unit.

As similar requirements are often expressed in multiple units of competency, Step123 often 'clusters' a number of units together for assessment to avoid repeating assessment of the same tasks.

### **Simulated Work Environments**

When conducting training and assessment in a simulated workplace environment, Step123 ensures that the simulated environment gives students the opportunity to meet the following critical criteria:

- Quality – The work is of the standard required for entry into the industry.
- Productivity – The work is performed within a timeframe appropriate for entry to the industry.
- Safety – The work is performed in a manner that meets industry safety standards.

This approach ensures that students are 'work ready' on successful completion of units of competency. All simulations used provide opportunities for integrated assessment of competence that include coverage of the Dimensions of Competency:

- Performing the task (task skills);
- Managing a number of tasks (task management skills);
- Dealing with workplace irregularities such as unexpected problems, breakdowns and changes in routine (contingency management skills);
- Fulfilling the responsibilities and expectations of the job and workplace, including working with others (job/role environment skills); and
- Transferring competencies to new contexts.

Assessment activities are designed to be realistic and reasonable in terms of scale. Assessment conducted under simulated conditions therefore reflects those typically found in the workplace.

### **Principles of Assessment**

Step123 ensures the principles of fairness, flexibility, validity and reliability are met in all assessment approaches.

#### **1.8.52. Fairness**

- The individual student's needs are considered in the assessment process.
- Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments are applied by Step123 to take into account the individual student's needs.
- Step123 informs the student about the assessment process, and provides the student with the opportunity to challenge the result of the assessment and be reassessed if necessary.

#### **1.8.53. Flexibility**

Assessment is flexible to the individual student by:

- Reflecting the student's needs;
- Assessing competencies held by the student no matter how or where they have been acquired; and
- Drawing from a range of assessment methods and using those that are appropriate to the context, the Unit of Competency and associated assessment requirements, and the individual.

#### **1.8.54. Validity**

Any assessment decision of Step123 is justified, based on the evidence of performance of the individual student. Validity requires:

- Assessment against the unit/s of competency and the associated assessment requirements covers the broad range of skills and knowledge that are essential to competent performance;
- Assessment of knowledge and skills is integrated with their practical application;
- Assessment to be based on evidence that demonstrates that a student could demonstrate these skills and knowledge in other similar situations; and
- Judgement of competence is based on evidence of student performance that is aligned to the unit/s of competency and associated assessment requirements.

#### **1.8.55. Reliability**

Evidence presented for assessment is consistently interpreted and assessment results are comparable irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment.

#### **Rules of Evidence**

Step123 ensures the rules of validity, sufficiency, authenticity and currency are met in evidence collection approaches.

#### **1.8.56. Validity**

The assessor is assured that the student has the skills, knowledge and attributes as described in the module or Unit of Competency and associated assessment requirements.

#### **1.8.57. Sufficiency**

The assessor is assured that the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence enables a judgement to be made of a student's competency.

#### **1.8.58. Authenticity**

The assessor is assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the student's own work.

#### **1.8.59. Currency**

The assessor is assured that the assessment evidence demonstrates current competency. This requires the assessment evidence to be from the present or the very recent past.

### **Assessment Methods**

*Assessment methods* are the particular technique/s used to gather different types of evidence. There are three main assessment methods or techniques used by Step123:

- Observation (sometimes referred to as demonstration, simulation, role play, scenario, etc.) – where the student is observed performing their skills and knowledge;
- Interview (sometimes referred to as questioning, verbal quiz, test, explanation, competency conversation, role play, scenario, case study, etc.) - where the student describes or answers questions to confirm their skills and knowledge; and
- Product (sometimes referred to as project, case study, scenario, creation, work product, etc.) - where the

student provides a product they have created to confirm their skills and knowledge.

### **Assessment attempts**

Participants will be given up to three (3) attempts at any one assessment item, if allocated time allows. If the allocated time is insufficient, reassessment policy will be implemented.

Your trainer/assessor will mark 'Competent' (C) or 'Not Competent' (NC) on the assessment instrument to indicate the assessment decision. Where 'NC' is indicated you will receive further training/coaching before re-assessment occurs. Only those assessment items that were completed incorrectly or not completed at all are required to be re-assessed. All participants are given three (3) attempts at any one assessment item. If allocated time allows. If you are deemed to have not met the assessment requirements after the first attempt, you are able to work with your trainer/assessor and then permitted further attempts.

### **Reassessment Policy**

Where a participant has failed to meet the competency standards of the assessment after further training has been undertaken a result of 'Not Competent' will be recorded. The participant will be given the opportunity to be reassessed at a later time, or re-enroll into a future course to increase their level of competency. If at any stage a participant feels that they were not being treated fairly in this process, an appeal can be lodged as per the Step123 appeals process.

Step123 Pty Ltd will provide the participant with a new date and time to attend for reassessment that is mutually agreed upon by Step123 and the participant. This will be scheduled with an independent assessor (i.e.: not the assessor who conducted the initial assessment)

Excludes VicRoads accredited assessments and Worksafe High Risk Work Assessments

### **Developing Assessment Resources**

Specific Unit of Competency assessment documentation is prepared and used for all Step123 operations to ensure all training package and assessment requirements are met. Step123 maintains resources available at all times for

delivery of every training product on its scope of registration—whether the training product is currently being delivered or not. All resources comply with specific requirements in the relevant training package or accredited course.

An *assessment tool* includes the following components:

- the context and conditions for the assessment;
- the tasks to be administered to the candidate;
- an outline of the evidence to be gathered from the candidate and the evidence criteria used to judge the quality of performance (i.e., the assessment decision making rules) and;
- the administration, recording and reporting requirements.

Assessment resources are, where possible, developed by Step123 personnel and tailored to the needs of each individual student and group. When developing assessment resources, Step123 uses the information from the unit or module elements, performance criteria and assessment requirements to determine what competence *looks like*.

Step123 uses this information to set benchmarks for measuring the student's performance using 'observable behaviors. This approach ensures that, once a student has completed the assessment tasks, the student has:



- Actually, undertaken all the required tasks; and
- Demonstrated their ability to do so in different contexts and environments.

Through the use of *Competency Mapping* validations, Step123 has confirmed that at all times these resources are aligned to, and meet requirements of, national competency standards.

## Evidence

Retention of student evidence on file through delivery services is a key requirement of Step123 operations.

### Assessment Evidence

All Step123 nationally recognized course services require assessment evidence to be retained on file for each Unit of Competency. This evidence is used to record the assessment process and result, confirming how Step123 personnel came to their decision to award competency or other result.

Step123 maintains compliance with ASQA's *General direction: Retention requirements for completed assessment student assessment items* and other contractual obligations in relation to the retention of assessment evidence.

Step123 securely retains and is able to produce in full audit if requested to do so all completed student assessment items for a student for a period of seven (7) years from the date on which the student completed or withdrew from their course program.

## Discipline

Step123 is committed to the principle of ensuring that every student has the right to participate in training programs, free of inappropriate behavior that may impair the learning processes, or the well-being of individuals.

### Student Responsibilities

Each Step123 student is expected to:

- Treat other students and Step123 personnel with respect and fairness;
- Follow any reasonable direction from Step123 personnel;
- Be punctual and regular in attendance;
- Refrain from using mobile phones in all training and practical sessions;
- Refrain from excessive or offensive swearing;
- Return Step123 equipment / materials on time;
- Observe normal safety practices, such as wearing approved clothing and protective equipment;
- Refrain from smoking in Step123 buildings and only smoke in designated smoking areas; and
  - Submit assessment events by the due date or seek approval to extend the due date. Step123 students must not at any time:
- Harass fellow students or Step123 personnel;
- Damage, steal, modify or misuse property (including electronic records);
- Be under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Engage in any other behavior which could offend, embarrass or threaten others; or
- Engage in plagiarism, collusion or cheating in any assessment activity.

### Cheating & Plagiarism

*Cheating* is the act of attempting to circumvent the assessment practices in an unethical or illegal manner. *Plagiarism* is a form of cheating. Plagiarism is the practice of claiming or implying original authorship of (or incorporating material from) someone else's written or creative work, in whole or in part, into one's own without adequate acknowledgement.

Cheating and plagiarism are serious acts and may result in a students' exclusion from a unit, module or a course overall. Where a student has any doubts about including the work of other authors in their

assessments, they should consult with their Step123 trainer and assessor.

The following list outlines some of the activities for which a student can be accused of plagiarism:

- Presenting any work by another individual as one's own unintentionally;
- Handing in assessments markedly similar to or copied from another student;
- Presenting the work of another individual or group as their own work; and
- Handing up assessments without the adequate acknowledgement of sources used, including assessments taken totally or in part from the internet.

Students are required to submit a signed cover sheet with every assessment. This includes a declaration that all work submitted is their own work except where there is clear acknowledgement or reference to the work of others.

## **Breaches**

*Breach of discipline* means any conduct that impairs the reasonable freedom of other persons to pursue their learning or work, or is in breach of the Step123's expectations.

A student commits a breach of discipline if she/he:

- Assaults a person on the premises of the Step123's training site or nominated facility;
- Unlawfully removes, damages or uses any property of another person or the Step123;
- Obstructs personnel of Step123 in the performance of their duties;
- Obstructs the teaching / training of a group or an assessment activity;
- Commits or engages in any dishonest or unfair act in relation to an assessment activity, such as plagiarism or cheating;
- Willfully disobeys or disregards any lawful order or direction given by a member of personnel;
- Enters part of the Step123 's premises when directed not to do so by a member of personnel;
- Fails to leave part of the Step123 's premises when directed to do so by a member of personnel;
- Fails to return Step123 property or pay replacement costs when instructed to do so;
- Fails to pay financial commitments to Step123;
- Enters part of the Step123's premises whilst under the influence of alcohol or a drug;
- Engages in any unlawful activity on the Step123 's premises such as using, possessing or supplying any prohibited drug, substance or weapon;
- Discriminates against a person on the grounds of the person's age, race, sex, sexuality, gender, marital status, physical or intellectual disability, background or religion;
- Incites hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of, a person or group of persons on the grounds of the person's age, race, sex, homosexuality, transgender, marital status, physical or intellectual disability or religion of the person or members of the group; or
- Commits any other act which could reasonably be considered to be in breach of Step123 expectations.

### **1.8.60. Addressing Breaches**

Step123 personnel and students have an interest and a responsibility to prevent minor behavioral problems from becoming larger ones. Any individual who believes that a breach of discipline has occurred should report the breach of discipline to Step123 without delay.

1. All cases of breach of discipline committed by a Step123 representative must be reported to the *Chief Executive Officer*.
2. In the case of a student breach, the breach must be reported to Step123's *Chief Executive Officer* in writing with the following information:
  - student name and program;
  - Description of the breach of discipline;
  - Damage or inconvenience caused by the breach;
  - Level of cooperation given by the student;
  - Witnesses to the breach; and
  - Evidence available to support the claim of a breach.

3. If appropriate, the student can be ordered off the Step123's premises for the remainder of the day on which the breach takes place. Circumstances where it may be appropriate to exclude the student from the Step123's premises include serious cases of breach of discipline such as violence, abusive behavior, discrimination, vandalism or willful disobedience of a personnel direction.

In situations of greater urgency, such as cheating or violence, an oral report may be made to Step123's *Chief Executive Officer* in the first instance, followed by the written report as soon as practicable thereafter.

4. Within two working days of the report, the *Chief Executive Officer* will speak to the student concerned, in the presence of the relevant member of personnel if possible and if not then in the presence of a third party chosen by the *Chief Executive Officer*.

The student may also have a representative present to act as a witness to the discussion. Where appropriate, the students are cautioned and advised of the possible consequences and the grounds for such report. Confidentiality of all meetings is maintained.

5. Step123's *Chief Executive Officer* may apply any of the following penalties where satisfied a breach of discipline has been committed and the penalty matches the seriousness of the breach:

- A verbal or written reprimand;
- A requirement to attend counselling at a specified time and place;
- Payment of compensation by student for damages or loss of resources;
- Restitution of property removed or damaged;
- Use of specified equipment only in accordance with certain conditions (for a set period); or
- Exclusion from Step123.

Attempts are to be made to solve behavioral problems of students through discussion and mediation before the provision of more formal procedures is invoked.

6. Any penalty imposed is communicated to the student in writing within five days of the meeting. The student is also advised of the right to appeal the penalty under Step123 *Complaints* arrangements.

## Validation

*Validation* is the quality review of the assessment process. Validation involves checking that the assessment tool/s produce/s valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable reasonable judgements to be made as to whether the requirements of the training package or VET accredited courses are met.

Step123 has implemented a *Validation Plan* for ongoing systematic validation of assessment practices and judgements that includes for each training product on Step123's scope of registration:

- When assessment validation will occur;
- Which training products will be the focus of the validation;
- Who will lead and participate in validation activities; and
- How the outcomes of these activities will be documented and acted upon?

Each training product is validated at least once every five years, with at least 50% of products validated within the first three years of each five-year cycle, taking into account the relative risks of all of the training products on Step123's scope of registration, including those risks identified by ASQA.

## Complaints

During course activities, students may have some concerns with the processes they are being exposed to or they may be unhappy with a particular aspect of the program. Step123 undertakes to provide a mechanism which allows for the fair and equitable resolution of any issues.

Step123's complaints process is available to manage and respond to allegations involving the conduct of:

- Step123, its trainers, assessors or other personnel; or

- A Step123 contracted third party providing services of Step123, including the third-party representative's trainers, assessors or other personnel; or
  - A student of Step123.
- Allowing students to easily engage with the personnel of Step123 about any concerns they have can stop minor issues becoming larger. There is no fee or charge levied for any complaint processed.
- Step123 will maintain a student complainant's enrolment during any appeal process.
- Step123's complaints process is publicly available on the Step123 website, and is provided to all prospective clients via the relevant handbook for each stakeholder group prior to enrolment. Where Step123 uses third parties to deliver services, complaints information is also made available to prospective clients of these third-party representatives.
- Step123's complaints process follows the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness by allowing anyone subject to a decision by Step123, or anyone who has allegations made against them, to tell their side of the story before a decision is made.

### **Complaint & Grievance Procedure**

The following problem resolution framework has therefore been implemented for all stakeholders raising a complaint or issue, with a desire to resolve matters as positive adults. This procedure applies to all complaints about:

- Academic matters from students;
  - Non-academic matters from students; and
  - Non-academic matters from persons seeking to enroll with the Step123 in a VET course or unit of study.
1. In the first instance a student should discuss the matter with the personnel member or responsible person concerned. Where this is not considered appropriate then the complainant is encouraged to discuss the matter with Step123 management. If the complainant is satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, it would mean that the matter is resolved.
  2. Any client may submit a formal complaint to Step123 in writing. Complaints are to include the following information:
    - Submission date of complaint;
    - Name of complainant;
    - Nature of complaint;
    - Date of the event which led to the complaint; and
    - Any other relevant information or attachments (if applicable).
  3. The Step123 Chief Executive Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five working days and arrange a suitable time if needed to discuss the complaint.
  4. The Chief Executive Officer will investigate the complaint, or refer the matter to appropriate Step123 personnel to investigate. In either case, the investigation will be resolved and decisions made on the complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being received in writing. In all cases, each party may be accompanied and assisted by a third party at any relevant meeting.
  5. The complainant will be informed of any decisions or outcomes concluded in writing, with reasons provided for the decisions or outcomes. With this notification, all complainants will receive information on how they can progress their complaint if still unhappy.
  6. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may escalate the complaint in writing to the Step123 Chief Executive Officer.
  7. Escalated complaints are to include the following information:
    - Submission date of complaint;
    - Name of complainant;
    - Nature of complaint;

- Reasons why the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the original complaint; and
  - Any other relevant information or attachments (if applicable).
8. The Step123 Chief Executive Officer will acknowledge receipt of the escalated complaint in writing within five working days and arrange a suitable time if needed to discuss the complaint.
9. The Chief Executive Officer will investigate the complaint, or refer the matter to an external dispute resolution process by a body appointed for this purpose by Step123. The *default* external body available is:

**Company:** Resolution Institute

**ABN:** 69 008 651 232

**Address:** Level 1, 13-15 Bridge Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia

**Phone Number:** +61 2 9251 3366

**Fax Number:** +61 2 9251 3733 **Email:** [leadr@leadr.com.au](mailto:leadr@leadr.com.au) **Website:** [www.resolution.institute](http://www.resolution.institute)

In either case, the investigation will be resolved and decisions made on the escalated complaint within twenty working days of the complaint being received in writing.

10. The complainant will be informed of any decisions or outcomes concluded in writing, with reasons provided for the decisions or outcomes. With this notification, all complainants will receive information on how they can progress their complain if still unhappy.

11. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, and the complaint is yet to be mediated by an external dispute resolution process, they may escalate the complaint in writing to the Step123 *Chief Executive Officer*. In this situation, the *Chief Executive Officer* will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the escalated complaint in writing within five working days; and
- Refer the matter to an external dispute resolution process by a body appointed for this purpose by Step123.
- Step123 will give due consideration to any recommendations arising from the external review within ten working days of the receipt of the recommendations.
- The investigation will be resolved and decisions made on the complaint within thirty working days of the escalated complaint being received in writing.

12. The complainant will be informed of any decisions or outcomes concluded in writing, with reasons provided for the decisions or outcomes. With this notification, all complainants will receive information on how they can progress their complaint if still unhappy.

All stages of the complaints process are documented and notes provided to all parties involved, including the outcomes of the complaint at each stage and reasons for the decisions made. Each complaint and its outcome is recorded in writing and stored on the *Complaints Register*.

If at any stage Step123 considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalize the complaint, Step123:

- Informs the complainant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required; and
- Regularly updates the complainant on the progress of the matter.

If the internal or external complaint handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the student, Step123 immediately implements any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advises the student of the outcome.

At all times records of complaints and grievances are maintained confidentially. Step123 retains records of all complaints and grievances for a period of at least five years, allowing parties to the complaint or

grievance appropriate access to these records.

### **Complaints Key Contacts**

If the student is still not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, they are directed to seek further assistance from the following additional parties:

Organization	Details
Vocational Education & Training Programs Australia Skills & Quality Authority (ASQA)	1300 701 801 enquiries@asqa.gov.au
Victorian Department of Education & Training	www.skills.vic.gov.au

### **Improvement Actions**

Step123 confirms its commitment to investigate and act on any complaint raised, and also to take appropriate action in any case where complaints are substantiated. In cases where a complaint is upheld, Step123 endeavors to identify the cause of the complaint and implement steps to prevent the situation happening again.

All improvement actions arising from complaints are raised via an *Improvement Record*. Step123 maintains a *Continuous Improvement Register* for recording the receipt and management of improvement records.

Once improvement records are raised, review complaints and their causes, evaluate corrective actions to resolve the issue and prevent reoccurrence, implement appropriate actions, record results of actions undertaken and review these actions to ensure effectiveness after implementation.

### **Assessment Appeals**

Step123 provides all students with a formal appeals process, which draws on a commitment to all parties understanding their rights and responsibilities in the assessment process. Other grievances or issues not pertaining to assessments should be referred to Step123's complaints processes.

Step123's appeals process facilitates requests for a review of decisions, including assessment decisions, made by Step123 or a third-party representative providing services on Step123's behalf.

Step123's appeals process follows the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness by allowing anyone subject to a decision by Step123, or anyone who has allegations made against them, to tell their side of the story before a decision is made. There is no fee or charge levied for any appeal processed.

Step123 will maintain a student appellant's enrolment during any appeal process.

Step123's process ensures that the decision-maker is independent of the decision being reviewed (for example, an assessor does not consider or decide an appeal against an assessment decision they made).

If a student objects to actions taken or decisions made by Step123 personnel in conducting Recognition of Prior Learning and assessment services, they have the right to lodge an appeal.

Students also have the right to lodge an appeal against competency decisions made if:



- They believe the outcome is invalid; or
- They feel the process was invalid, inappropriate or unfair.

### **Appeals Process**

Step123's appeals process is publicly available on the Step123's website.

1. Before making a formal appeal, students are required to discuss the matter with the relevant Step123 personnel in an effort to reach an agreement. Step123 personnel will undertake to reassess the decision that has been made.
2. If a student is still unhappy, they must lodge a formal appeal in writing to Step123 Chief Executive Officer.
3. Upon receiving a formal appeal, Step123 Chief Executive Officer will:
  - Acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing within five working days; and
  - Appoint an independent member of personnel as a third party to try to resolve the issue. Any decision recommended by the third party is not binding to either party.

The independent member will review the information provided by all parties and either reject or uphold the appeal. The student will be advised of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 10 working days of lodging the appeal, including reasons for the decision made, and any additional appeal or complaint options available to them.

4. If a student, on receiving written advice on the initial appeal, is still unhappy they may lodge a second appeal to the Step123 Chief Executive Officer. The Step123 Chief Executive Officer will:
  - Acknowledge receipt of the further appeal in writing within five working days; and
  - Appoint another Registered Training Organization (RTO) to review the appeal, at no additional cost to the student. This second registered training organization will:
    - Uphold the appeal;
    - Reject the appeal; or
    - Recommend further evidence gathering by either party.

The student will be advised of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 20 working days of lodging the further appeal, including reasons for the decision made, and any additional appeal or complaint options available to them.

5. If a student, on receiving written advice on the further appeal, is still unhappy they have a right of appeal to:
  - Australian Skills & Quality Authority (ASQA) via the appropriate process.  
<http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/making-a-complaint.html>

All stages of the appeals process are documented and notes provided to all parties involved, including the outcomes of the appeal and reasons for the decisions made. Each appeal and its outcome is recorded in writing and stored on the *Appeals Register*.

If at any stage Step123 considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalize the appeal, Step123:

- Informs the appellant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required; and
- Regular updates the appellant on the progress of the matter.

### **Improvement Actions**

Step123 confirms its commitment to investigate and act on any appeal raised, and also to take appropriate action in any case where appeals are substantiated. In cases where an appeal is upheld, Step123 endeavors to identify the cause of the appeal and implement steps to prevent the situation happening again.

All improvement actions arising from appeals are raised via an *Improvement Record*. Step123 maintains a

*Continuous Improvement Register* for recording the receipt and management of improvement records.

Once improvement records are raised, activities review appeals and their causes, evaluate corrective actions to resolve the issue and prevent reoccurrence, implement appropriate actions, record results of actions undertaken and review these actions to ensure effectiveness after implementation.

## Evaluation

Step123 systematically evaluates and uses the outcomes of the evaluations to continually improve its training and assessment strategies and practices. Evaluation information includes but is not limited to quality/performance indicator data, validation outcomes, client, trainer and assessor feedback and complaints and appeals.

Step123 is committed to ensuring quality delivery and assessment of all training. The formal evaluation process is a major strategy in the continual improvement of all service provision.

## Qualifications Issuance

Step123 entities issue AQF certification documentation only to a student whom it has assessed as meeting the requirements of the training product as specified in the relevant training package or VET accredited course.

Step123 has robust controls in place to ensure qualifications, statements of attainment and records of results are not issued unless the student has completed all requirements. While Step123 delivers at multiple locations and through third party arrangements, it has centralized issuance of certification to strengthen these controls. Certification is only issued to students after they have fully demonstrated competence.

### Australian Qualifications Framework Requirements

Step123 ensures:

- Students receive the certification documentation to which they are entitled.
- AQF qualifications are correctly identified in certification documentation.
- AQF qualifications are protected against fraudulent issuance.
- A clear distinction can be made between AQF qualifications and non-AQF qualifications.
- Certification documentation is used consistently across the education and training sectors.
- Students and others are confident that the qualifications they have been awarded by Step123 are part of

Australia's national qualifications framework.

### Qualifications Pathways

Step123 also accepts and provides credit to students for units of competency and/or modules (unless licensing or regulatory requirements prevent this) where these are evidenced by:

- AQF certification documentation issued by any other RTO or AQF authorized issuing organization; or
- An authenticated VET transcripts issued by the Registrar.

Step123 ensures it maximizes the credit students can gain for learning already undertaken, by:

- Enhancing student progression into and between AQF qualifications;
- Recognizing the multiple pathways students take to gain AQF qualifications and that learning can be formal, non-formal or informal; and
- Supporting the development of pathways in qualifications design.

### 1.8.61. Credit Arrangements Register

Step123 maintains a publicly available *Credit Agreements Register* of all credit arrangements and agreements in place with other educational institutions. The *Credit Agreements Register* is available on

the Step123 website.

### **Unique Student Identifier (USI)**

Step123 ensures that it meets the requirements of the student Identifier scheme at all times, including:

- Verifying with the Registrar, a USI provided to it by an individual before using that USI for any purpose;
- Ensuring that Step123 entities do not issue AQF certification documentation to an individual without being in receipt of a verified USI for that individual, unless an exemption applies under the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*;
- Ensuring that where an exemption applies, it will inform the student prior to either the completion of the enrolment or commencement of training and assessment, whichever occurs first, that the results of the training will not be accessible through the Commonwealth and will not appear on any authenticated VET transcript prepared by the Registrar; and
- Ensuring the security of USIs and all related documentation under its control, including information stored in its student management systems.

To avoid possible delays in issuing certification, Step123 has processes in place to verify a student's USI on

enrolment or as soon as possible thereafter - well in advance of when certification is expected to be issued. Step123 does not include the student's USI on any documentation, consistent with the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*.

### **Issuance Timelines**

Step123 ensures AQF certification documentation is issued to a student within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the student being assessed as meeting the requirements of the training product if the training program in which the student is enrolled is complete, and providing all agreed fees the student owes to Step123 have been paid.

Step123 issues AQF certification documentation directly to the student, not to another party, such as an employer.

### **Reissue of Testamur Documentation**

Step123 ensures that current and past students are able to access records of their achievements.

All Step123 students who hold a verified USI, and whose results have been reported into the USI system, will be able to access their records through the USI system.

Where a student's achievements have not been recorded through the USI system, Step123 has processes in place to ensure that this student can access re-issues of their testamur documentation via a *Request for Reissue Form*.

A fee of \$30.00 including GST per request applies to all re-issue of documentation requests. All documentation re-issues occur within twenty-one (21) calendar days of receipt of the *Request for Reissue Form* with accompanying fee payment.

### **Change of Name, Gender and Other details**

If you have changed your name or other personal details, or you need to correct an error in our student management system related to your name, please complete the Change of Student Details form. These forms can be sent to by via email, general mail or you can pick the form up from any of the Step123 sites.

You must also change your details on your Unique Student Identifier (USI) <https://www.usi.gov.au/faqs/how-can-i-change-my-personal-details>

In the case of name change, submit one of the following documents that specify preferred name:

- certificate from an Australian state or territory registry of births, deaths and marriages (e.g., marriage certificate; change of name certificate or birth certificate).

In the case of gender change, attach one of the following documents that specify preferred gender:

- one statement from a registered medical practitioner or registered psychologist
- valid government travel document (e.g., passport)
- certificate from an Australian state or territory registry of births, deaths and marriages (e.g., birth certificate; document recognizing change of sex/gender).

Only original documents or copies of documents CERTIFIED TO BE TRUE COPIES OF THE ORIGINAL by an appropriate authority will be accepted.

Information regarding how to have documents certified can be found at <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/certifiedcopies>

## Transition of Training Products

Students are entitled to graduate with a qualification that most closely represents the current skill needs of industry. A qualification being superseded or discontinued is a clear indication that industry needs have changed to the extent that the previous qualification is no longer suitable.

Step123 ensures students are not enrolled in qualifications/courses that adversely affect their opportunities for employment and/or future study pathways. Timely and adequate advice and guidance is provided to students if the qualification or course in which they are enrolled is superseded/deleted/expired.

To best meet the needs of students and of industry, Step123 transfers students from superseded qualifications into a replacement qualification as soon as possible.

## Records Management

The Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) is the national data standard that ensures consistent and accurate capture and reporting of VET information about students.

Step123 has implemented the AVETMISS compliant Step123 student management system for the recording, tracking and management of all student records, including providing ASQA with AVETMISS compliant data. A file record (hard copy and electronic) is established for each enrolled student.

Step123 cooperates with ASQA in the retention, archiving, retrieval and transfer of records.

We wish you good luck and success in your career and future endeavors.